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**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**

**Content Analysis of the Media Statements Made By Select Armed Groups  
Operating in Egypt 2013-2015**

**A Masters Project Submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Global Affairs**

**By**

**Karim Marzouk**

**Summer 16**

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## **1. Abstract**

The project discusses the justifications that the armed groups operating in Egypt provide for their use of violence. The paper classifies the groups that use violence for political reasons in accordance to their motivations as presented in their statements. The major three reasons the terrorist/insurgent groups give for justifying their use of force are the religious, nationalist, and grievance justifications. The paper's aim is to provide a result upon which an action plan for handling the problem can be developed.

The paper suggests that grievance is the most common justification among the armed groups in Egypt, according to the studied sample. It suggests also that some groups that are perceived as fanatic religious do not use religion as a core justification for their behavior, in spite of the fact that their messages are sent through a religious language. In addition, they assert that they do not target civilians, and that they are keen on not hurting them while targeting the governmental forces. On the other hand, the paper suggests that some groups adopting non-religious justifications attack civilian targets through their operations. Finally, the paper briefly suggests an action plan according to the results of the data analysis.

## **2. Definitions**

The paper defines the three justification categories as follows:

- A. Religious justification: addressing interpretations of religious texts or beliefs legitimizing the groups' violent behavior against the attacked targets.
- B. Nationalist justification: addressing other countries' aggressive behavior against the groups' home country to legitimize attacking these countries' targets as a method of deterrence or revenge.

- C. Grievance justification: addressing the violations of the authority against a group of people with regard to their basic rights, such as security and human rights, upon which the groups claim they have the right to perform violence to deter or take revenge from the authority.

### **3. Introduction**

Over the last few years, the armed non-state actors became a very important number in the equation of the security plans and strategies in the MENA region, especially after the dramatic political and security changes that took place after 2011, changing political regimes, and bringing new actors to the security scene.

Since 2011, Egypt has gone through huge political incidents, including changing the regime twice. In 2012, in particular, the Egyptian political and security arena witnessed a first of its kind situation, where the Islamists came to power through electing the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohammad Mursi.

By 2013, and with overthrowing the Brotherhood from power, the pace and size of the armed operations targeting the state forces or the civilians have rapidly increased, amounting to levels that perhaps never existed through the entire modern history of Egypt before.

This paper explores the armed groups operating in Egypt, in particular since the Islamists have been thrown from power in 2013. The aim is to answer the question of how do the armed groups in Egypt justify their use of force? Do they provide religious or nationalist justifications, or do they claim that they defend grievances by government?

The importance of such question lays in the government's need for an answer in order to determine a proper mean through which it can address these possible claims.. For instance, if the majority of the armed groups provide religious justifications, the government would need to work more

on applying educational and advocacy methods that rebut these claims, while in case the more frequent justification is that the operations aim at defending weak categories of people, so the government would need to either show that they are invalid claims, or to meet these categories' needs so as not to leave a possible justification for their use of violence.

#### **4. Research Question**

The problem with analyzing the crises formed by the actions taken by a number of armed groups is that there is always a level of uncertainty about the exact reasons behind the incidents take place causing damages or losses. That makes addressing and fixing these crises efficiently require deep understanding for the nature, motives and goals of these different groups, otherwise, the efforts done by the government to address these crises would go in vein. For instance, the government may assume that the motive behind the armed operations targeting its forces is the fanatic religious beliefs these groups adopt, overlooking that the areas that these groups are active in are deeply deprived of services. That deprivation may lead to losing loyalty to the centralized state, causing the local citizens to revolt against the state's authority in order to create a new reality where they can have more or fair amount of services and wealth.

What the paper aims to answer is what are the justifications the armed groups provide in their announcements, in order to be able to classify these groups in accordance with their nature and motives.

Different possible results are expected through answering the question above:

- The different groups adopt the similar justification.
- The different groups adopt a number of different justifications at the same time.
- Each group adopts a different justification, and does not share it with the other groups.

For example, the research may conclude that the active groups in the scene are A, B, and C, and they all focus on the religious justification in particular. Other possibility is to find that each of the groups A, B, and C focus on the religious, nationalists, and grievance justification at the same time. The last possibility is to find that group A focuses on the religious justification, group B focuses on the nationalist justification, and group C focuses on the grievance justification.

Figuring out the real justifications they adopt would allow suggesting efficient counter strategies to face every kind of them, in addition to support or deny any preconceived ideas about the nature of the state's enemy/enemies, away from guessing about that/these natures.

## **5. Client Description**

The client that would be interested in this study is the Egyptian policy makers, the Presidency and the Cabinet, since they are the bodies entrusted putting plans and strategies to combat these groups.

The negative impacts of the armed operations that target the security forces or the civilians in Egypt do not stop at the casualties or injuries. For instance, the recent incident of the Russian civilian airplane crashed in Sinai has affected the tourism income of the area and Egypt in general after cancelling flights were coming to Egypt<sup>1</sup>. On one side, this is an economic issue that urgently needed to be handled, given that the tourism income represents about 11% of Egypt's GDP<sup>2</sup>. On the other side such incidents support the claims of the regime's opponents that the current authority failed to impose control on the armed groups, which decreases its legitimacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Russian plane crash: First flights return to UK after Sharm alert - BBC News. (2015, November 7). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34743388>

<sup>2</sup> State Information Services Tourism in Egypt. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.sis.gov.eg/En/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?CatID=416#.Vle-D3YrLIU>

Moreover, in places like Sinai in particular, where there are huge rough terrains that are difficult for the governmental forces to control, the presence of the armed groups imposes further threat: having the chance to develop their capabilities under the relative stability they are granted. As a consequence, the secret armed groups can turn into larger and stronger organized entities which ultimately reflects positively on the pace and quality of their violent operations, as well as, on the number of their supporters in the areas they operate in. This study can provide the Egyptian policy makers sufficient information about the nature of a number of groups operating in different areas in Egypt and the justifications they provide to the local residences, in order to enable the government to handle the possible reasons that may drive these residences to sympathize with them.

In conclusion, the Egyptian government is one of the bodies that should be concerned the most about such studies that address the nature of the armed groups it fights, in order to be able to combat their operations and deprive them from more possible supporters through refuting their claims.

## **6. Findings**

Through analyzing a representative sample of the statements issued by a number of armed groups operating in Egypt, the paper concluded a number of results. Contrary to the stereotypes about the groups with a religious background, and those who provide their messages through a religious language, the paper found that not all of them rely on the religious justification as a core justification for their use of violence. On the other hand, they heavily rely on the grievance justification, which is a common justification appeared in all the cases that were analyzed.

In addition, the paper found that not all the groups use a single justification, for example, they can use the religious, nationalist, and grievance justifications at the same time. On the other hand, some groups use grievance as a single justification, but at the same time there are clues can be seen in their statements implying a religious background. However, these clues are not enough to rely on in



concluding their background. The paper analyzed the groups' justification based on their statements only, not through investigating their background.

## 7. Background

The armed violence against the Egyptian government was one of the most prominent factors that determined the features of Egypt's political arena in approximately the past 60 years, since the well-known incident of El-Mansheya, President Gamal Abd El Naser assassination attempt, 1954, of which the Brotherhoods were accused of<sup>3</sup>. The year after this incident, a number of Muslim Brotherhood leaders were imprisoned on charges of sedition, including the well-known Islamist figure Sayyed Qutb who was released from prison in 1964 and executed in 1966<sup>4-5</sup>.

The significance of this era in the Islamists' history is that it witnessed the emergence of the Qutbism ideology; Sayyed Qutb wrote his book *Signposts in the Road* (1964) while he was in prison, which became a masterpiece and reference for the fanatic groups who legitimize the use of force against the governments they fight.

In 1970 Sadat took office, after Abd El Naser's death. Unlike his predecessor, Sadat eased the restrictions put on the Muslim Brotherhood, granting them more freedom to operate in the universities, and easing the censorship on their publications<sup>6</sup>. Sadat hoped that the freedom he gave to the Islamists would counter the power of the leftists then. However, in 1981, and after his controversial visit to the

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<sup>3</sup> Witte, S. (2004). Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Rosen Publishing Group.

<sup>4</sup> Sayyid Qutb. (2015). In Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/487747/Sayyid-Qutb>

<sup>5</sup> Muslim Brotherhood. (2015). In Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/399387/Muslim-Brotherhood>

<sup>6</sup> Dede, A. Y. (2008). *Islamism, state control over religion and social identity: Turkey and Egypt*. ProQuest.

occupied Jerusalem in 1977, and the peace agreement with Israel, Sadat was assassinated by Khaled El Islambolli, Army Lieutenant, and member of the Islamic Jihad armed group<sup>7</sup>.

Following Sadat, Mubarak came to power and started a new phase in the Islamists-state relationship. The restrictions the regime started decades after Mubarak took office continued. However, these restrictions did not eliminate the power of the Islamists, and the Muslim Brotherhoods in particular. As for their participation in the political life, and the, so called, democratic process, they did not adhere to a specific strategy over the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. They participated in the parliamentary elections in 1980s and boycotted the elections of 1990. In spite of the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood was a banned group, it was able to take 17 seats in the year 2000 parliament, when they ran as independent candidates, standing as the largest opposition group in that parliament<sup>8</sup>. The same thing was repeated in the 2005 elections, when the group and its supporters won 88 seats out of the 454 seats<sup>9</sup>.

In parallel to the Muslim Brotherhood's participation in the political process, another Islamist groups were involving in violence and military confrontations with the government, without clearly announcing relations between them and the Muslim Brotherhood, the most influential Islamist group in Egypt, and perhaps in the all the Sunni world. Between 1992 and 1998, Mubarak's regime faced one of the worst phases in the history of terrorism in Egypt, continuous small deadly attacks targeting officials, intellectuals, and tourists. The deaths of this period are estimated at about 1500 people<sup>10</sup>, mainly civilians<sup>11</sup>.

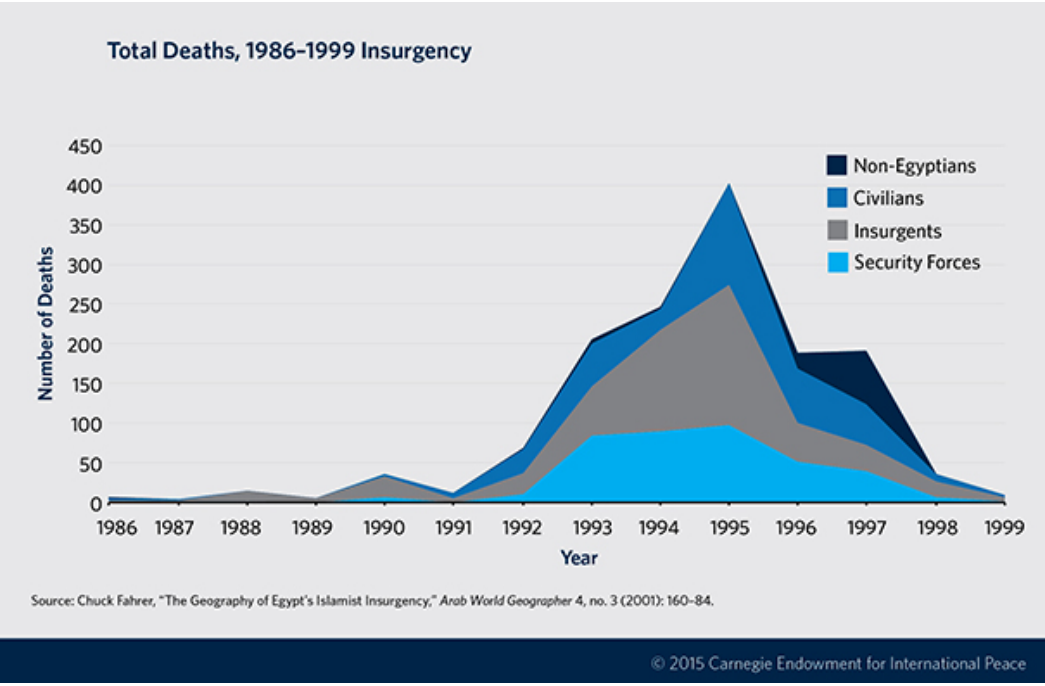
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<sup>7</sup> Tignor, R. L. (2011). *Egypt : A Short History*. Princeton, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com> p.280

<sup>8</sup> Muslim Brotherhood. (2015). In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com/EBchecked/topic/399387/Muslim-Brotherhood>

<sup>9</sup> Scott, R. (2010). *The challenge of political Islam: non-Muslims and the Egyptian state*. Stanford University Press. P.51

<sup>10</sup> Dunne, M., & Williamson, S. (2014). *Egypt's Unprecedented Instability by the Numbers*. Carnegie Endowment.



**Figure 1. Deaths resulted from the armed operations took place between 1986 and 1999**

In the 2000s as well, Egypt has suffered from various deadly attacks, targeted mainly the tourist areas. Around 150 people were killed in Sinai between 2004 and 2006 in attacks targeted tourists hotels.

By 2011, and with the political and security transitions took place in Egypt, the curve of the terrorist attacks took a significant up trend, in terms of pace and quality.

The impact of the temporary security unrest resulted by the wide-range turmoil occurred by January 2011 did not stop at raising the crime rates<sup>12</sup>, but also gave the chance to the armed groups to operate more freely, achieving a new levels of technicality in their operations, especially in Sinai, which has already been suffering for decades from the lack of adequate governmental control.

<sup>11</sup> AWAD, M., & HASHEM, M. (2015, October 21). Egypt's Escalating Islamist Insurgency. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/10/21/egypt-s-escalating-islamist-insurgency/ijgn>

<sup>12</sup> Egyptians become victims of soaring crime rate. (2013, May 1). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/7ffac226-adab-11e2-a2c7-00144feabdc0.html>

Since 2011, and unlike the nineties, the armed attacks have started to take a new trend, targeting the military and police personnel and equipment deployed in the fields, especially in Sinai, much more than civilians, as seen in the figure below<sup>13</sup>.

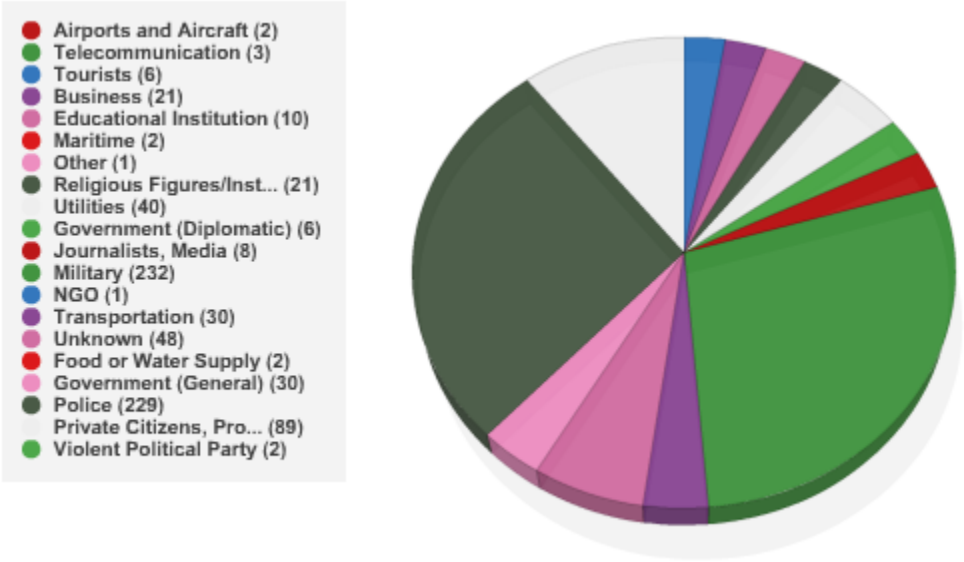


Figure 2. Comparison between the numbers of attacks on the different kinds of targets after 2011

By 2013, and after Mursi was overthrown from office, the pace of the operations significantly increased<sup>14</sup>, continuing on the same pattern of targeting mainly the governmental forces, in parallel with counter operations conducted by the government. This paper does not find that any of the major armed operations against the government was followed by declaring loyalty to the Muslim Brotherhood by the attackers. However, the only period in which the attacks against the pipeline provided gas to Israel and

<sup>13</sup> 141966 INCIDENTS. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from [http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=pie&chart=target&casualties\\_type=b&casualties\\_max=&start\\_yearonly=2011&end\\_yearonly=2014&ctp2=all&country=60&count=100](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=pie&chart=target&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=2011&end_yearonly=2014&ctp2=all&country=60&count=100)

<sup>14</sup> 141966 INCIDENTS. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from [http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=line&chart=target&casualties\\_type=b&casualties\\_max=&start\\_yearonly=2011&end\\_yearonly=2014&ctp2=all&country=60&count=100](http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?charttype=line&chart=target&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_yearonly=2011&end_yearonly=2014&ctp2=all&country=60&count=100)

Jordan, which was frequently attacked since 2011<sup>15</sup>, were suspended was when Mursi was in office.

Besides such incidents, the timing that the attacks increased in raises suspicion about the nature of the relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the armed groups.

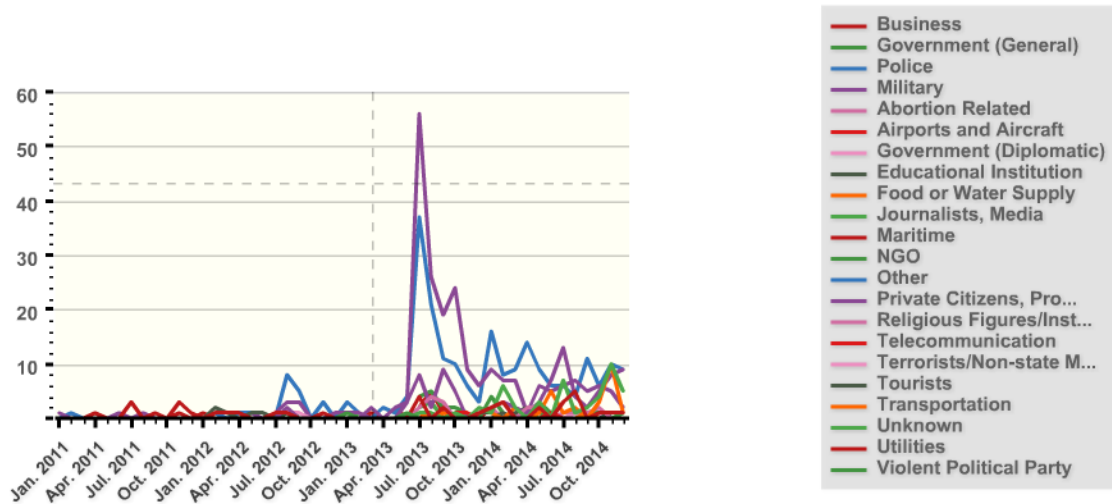


Figure 3. A graph shows a rapid increase in the number of operations after Mursi was overthrown from power

Coinciding with the dramatic security changes took place in Egypt, a lot of significant security unrests were going on in the region, most prominently the Syrian civil war, which gave an additional chance for the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) to expand, and ultimately, declaring the so called Caliphate in June 2014<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Arish gas pipeline bombed for 29th time. (2015, May 31). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/05/31/al-arish-gas-pipeline-bombed-for-29th-time/>

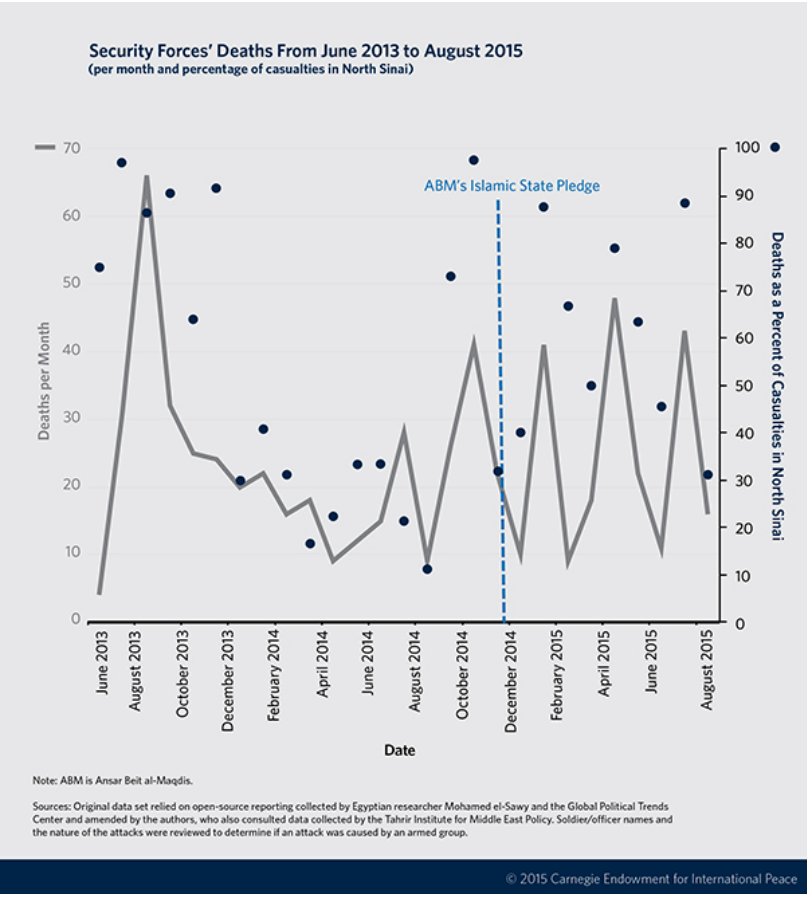
<sup>16</sup> Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). (2015). In Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Islamic-State-in-Iraq-and-the-Levant>

By November 2014, Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis, a group claimed conducting several operations in Sinai, pledged allegiance to ISIL<sup>17</sup>, becoming ISIL-Sinai Province. In spite of that ISIL is known for its high technicality compared to other groups, it is difficult to say whether or not its alliance with Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis raised the armed operations technical level in Egypt. The figures do not show a significant increase in the number of deaths among the security forces before and after November 2014<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, the high technical level the operations show appeared before and after that date. Perhaps the significant difference would be the incident of the Russian plane on October 31, 2015, of which Sinai Province claimed that it crashed over Sinai. If this claim is true, it would refer to a new level of operations; however, it would be still difficult to say that it is the alliance effect.

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<sup>17</sup> Gulhane, J. (2014, November 10). Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis pledge allegiance to 'Islamic State'. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/11/10/ansar-beit-al-maqdis-pledge-allegiance-islamic-state/>

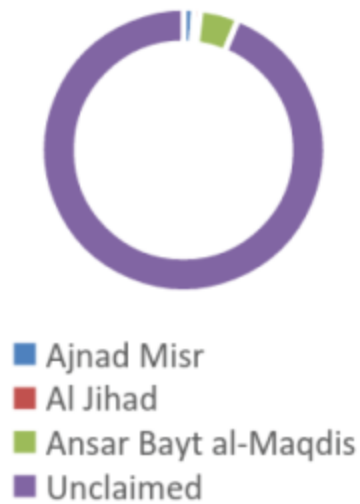
<sup>18</sup> AWAD, M., & HASHEM, M. (2015, October 21). Egypt's Escalating Islamist Insurgency. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/10/21/egypt-s-escalating-islamist-insurgency/ijgn>



**Figure 4. Comparison between the number of casualties in Sinai before and after the alliance between Ansar Beit El-Maqdis and ISIL**

Although the groups and individuals responsible for the armed operations conducted in Egypt over the recent years often do not declare their identity<sup>19</sup>, as seen in the figure below, the major operations are usually followed by videos or statements claimed to be produced by the attackers, in which they claim responsibility for, demonstrate, and justify the incidents. Unlike the Qaeda in the past when it was depending on the television networks to deliver their messages, the groups now often use social media to distribute their statements, which is often followed by halting the accounts they use by the networks administrations.

<sup>19</sup> McManus, A. (2014, May 21). Sisi, Sabahy, and the Security Question. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://timep.org/presidential-elections-monitoring/sisi-sabahy-security-question/>



**Figure 5. A graph shows the high percentage of the unclaimed operations**

It is difficult to know the exact number or identity of the armed groups operating in Egypt. However, there are a number of groups known for their attacks, and actively use their tools of propaganda to promote for these attacks. Examples for these groups are:

- The Popular Resistance Movement (Harakat Al Moqawma El Shaabeyya)
- ISIL-Sinai Province (Welayat Saynaa), formerly Supporters of Al-Aqsa Mosque, or Supporters of Jerusalem (Ansar Beit El-Maqdis)
- Brigades of Al Forqan, or Brigades of the Quran, or Brigades of Criterion (Kataeb Al-Forqan)
- Soldiers of Islam (Gond Al Islam)
- Supporters of Jihad, or Supporters of Holly Fighting (Ansar Al-Gehad)
- Soldiers of Egypt (Agnad Mesr or Ajnad Misr)
- Revolutionary Punishment (Al-Eqab Al-Thawri)

The justifications the releases present range from ideological to nationalist claims, in addition to grievances against the authority, which will be demonstrated in details through the research.



## 8. Literature Review

The issue of terrorism, and insurgency strategies and motives takes a significant area in the literature addresses the use of force, but before presenting what the scholars think about the different aspects of the issue, first, it is important to look at how they use the term ‘terrorism’.

### A. Definition

While Kydd and Walter (2006) define terrorism as “*the use of violence against civilians by non-state actors to attain political goals*”<sup>20</sup>, making the subject of the attacks, the civilians, is the main factor determining whether or not the act is sort of terrorism, Freedman (2007) does not focus on the identity of the subject or the attacker, defining the term as the action “*involves the creation of a psychological effect – terror – with a view to creating a political effect that will be manifest in changes in the target’s strategy.*”<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, the US Vice-President's Task Force (1986) defines terrorism as “*the unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives. It is generally intended to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals or groups to modify their behavior or policies.*”<sup>22</sup> (Kydd and Walter, 2006), putting the social objectives among the criteria determining whether the act is terrorism or not.

The paper suggests that the definition of Kydd and Walter is the most accurate and practical among the two other definitions above, at least for the purpose of this paper. The use of the psychological effect with the aim of creating pressure on the targeted party is done by the armies during

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<sup>20</sup> Kydd, A. H., & Walter, B. F. (2006). The strategies of terrorism. *International Security*, 31(1), 49-80.

<sup>21</sup> Freedman, L. (2007). Terrorism as a Strategy. *Government and Opposition*,42(3), 314-339.

<sup>22</sup> Merari, A. (1993). Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 5(4), 213-251.

wars, and by governments during the periods of tension with other governments, which is fine as long as we study the governments and armies' behaviors. However, the term 'terrorism' is often used in the context of incidents like bombings and shootings conducted by individuals or groups that are not affiliated to any governments. That is why it would be an expansion in the use of term if we included the acts of governments and armies as well. On the other hand, including achieving social goals among the criteria of defining "terrorism" sounds problematic, for the violence with the aim of achieving social gains includes usual crimes like kidnapping for example, or the threat to do so, which is, again, does not describe the context the term is usually used in.

It is also important here to distinguish between the acts of terrorism and the acts of insurgency, for, as mentioned above, the main factor needed for using the term 'terrorism' is the presence of an action done with the aim of terrifying or hurting civilians to attain a political goal. On the other hand, insurgency is often associated with combating the governmental forces in order to gain control over territory. "*.....terrorism and guerrilla are quite distinct. The most important difference is that unlike terrorism, guerrilla tries to establish physical control of a territory.*" (Merari, 1993).

## **B. Goals and Strategies**

The first step needed to study any of the terrorism cases is to exclude the assumption that the groups that conduct these acts are irrational, and without a specific goal behind their acts.

Some scholars believe that terrorist are motivated by political preferences, that they evaluate the expected political return of the options available for them to achieve their goals, and that they execute their operations when they find that these operations can enable them to obtain more political gains than

the other alternative options<sup>23</sup> (Abrahams, 2008). These goals determine whether and how terrorist operations will be launched (Kydd and Walter, 2006).

The scholars presented also the goals that terrorists often aim at achieving: regime change, territorial change, policy change, social control, and status quo maintenance (Kydd and Walter, 2006).

Kydd and Walter suggested also a number of strategies and tactics, including advertising and provocation, elimination of opposing forces, enforcing obedience in the population, and delegitimizing the regime.

While terrorists implement their strategies, whether long or short-term strategies, they need to provide real information to the audiences they want to influence, in order to gain credibility among these audiences. These audiences are the *”governments whose policies they wish to influence and individuals on the terrorists' own side whose support or obedience they seek to gain.”* (Kydd and Walter, 2006). As for the enemies, Kydd and Walter believe that this credibility needs to be translated into actual actions on the ground in order to prove the seriousness and strength of the groups: *“Given the conflict of interest between terrorists and their targets, ordinary communication or “cheap talk” is insufficient to change minds or influence behavior. If al-Qaida had informed the United States on September 10, 2001, that it would kill 3,000 Americans unless the United States withdrew from Saudi Arabia, the threat might have sparked concern, but it would not have had the same impact as the attacks that followed. Because it is hard for weak actors to make credible threats, terrorists are forced to display publicly just how far they are willing to go to obtain their desired results.”* (Kydd, and Walter, 2006).

Kydd and Walter addressed as well the importance of those who sympathize with the terrorist groups in funding them. They mentioned also five principle strategies associated with the terrorism operations:

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<sup>23</sup> Abrahms, M. (2008). What terrorists really want: Terrorist motives and counterterrorism strategy. *International Security*, 32(4), 78-105.

- 1- Attrition
- 2- Intimidation
- 3- Provocation
- 4- Spoiling
- 5- Outbidding

The attrition as a strategy followed by the terrorist groups has importance in the literature, because, as Kydd and Walter believe, *“the most important task for any terrorist group is to persuade the enemy that the group is strong and resolute enough to inflict serious costs, so that the enemy yields to the terrorists' demands.”* (Kydd and Walter, 2006). Crenshaw, 2007, mentions the same meaning, saying that *“terrorism may be perceived as useful in compelling states to withdraw from foreign commitments through a strategy of punishment and attrition. The point is to make the commitment so painful that the government will abandon it.”*<sup>24</sup>

As for intimidation, the terrorist groups need to provide evidence to the population that they have enough power to punish disobedience and show how the government does not have the ability to stop them.

The provocative actions conducted by terrorists aim at tempting the governments to respond to their attacks through actions that make these governments lose sympathizers, like involving in violence that does not discriminate between combatants and civilians, which moves the population to support the terrorists. *“Terrorism, especially random attacks on civilian populations, can be used as a means of provoking a government into overreaction. For example, Al-Qaeda's attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon may have been intended to provoke a massive and indiscriminate US response that*

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<sup>24</sup> Crocker, C. A., Hampson, F. O., & Aall, P. R. (2007). Leashing the dogs of war: conflict management in a divided world. US Institute of Peace Press.

would justify the charge that the United States wished to destroy Islam and was an enemy of the Muslim world.” (Crenshaw, 2007).”

Spoilers conduct their violent operations as an attempt to convince the enemies that the parties they involved in negotiations with, like moderates on the side of terrorists, are weak, and unable to control the violence on the ground, which undermines the efforts done to reach a peace settlement.

The fifth strategy Kydd and Walter listed is outbidding, saying that the terrorist groups use violence to provide evidence to the people that they have greater resolve to face the enemy than the other groups, and consequently, they deserve the support.

As this paper discusses armed groups who present themselves in a religious framework, among other groups, it is important to mention that *“religious fanaticism does not explain why the world leader in suicide terrorism is the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, a group that adheres to a Marxist/Leninist ideology, while existing psychological explanations have been contradicted by the widening range of socio-economic backgrounds of suicide terrorist.”*<sup>25</sup> (Pape, 2003).

It seems that these strategies and tactics work. According to Kydd and Walter, between 1980 and 2003, half of all suicide terrorist campaigns were followed by major concessions by the target governments, which shows the importance of implementing counterterrorism strategies that are able to face the strategies of the terrorist groups.

### **C. Motivations**

In addition to the political goals and strategies of the terrorists’ use of force, the literature addresses as well the motivations that can lead individuals and groups to involve in violence.

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<sup>25</sup> Pape, R. A. (2003). The strategic logic of suicide terrorism. *American political science review*, 97(03), 343-361.

The scholars mention several factors that can make the individuals turn from sympathizers with terrorists to real terrorists that are ready to use force. (Cragin, 2009) believes that the radicalization processes that individuals have gone through before being real terrorists has three different phases<sup>26</sup>. The first phase is the availability of the factors in the individuals' environment that make them ready to respond to the calls of the terrorist groups. These factors may include being brought up in a radical family and frustration with local or foreign policies. This "availability" phase can take place on the internet, of which its role will be addressed below. The second phase is what Cragin calls it "recruitment and indoctrination". It takes place after contact between individuals and the groups, and it works better when the virtual communications are supported by social linkages. The third phase in the radicalization process "*yields a commitment to action on the part of certain individuals*", according to Cragin. The scholar explains that in some cases the grievance seems to be the final trigger to turn sympathizers into terrorists. Finally, the scholar concludes that ideology, politics or poverty, at least to varying degrees, motivate terrorism.

The literature presents as well the motivational categories, which classify the groups according to their objectives, giving a special importance to four categories<sup>27</sup>. The first is the separatist category, such as the groups that aim at independence from existing entities or political autonomy. The justifications this kind of groups provide include social justice, and combatting occupiers. The second is the ethnocentric category, the groups that perceive race as the basis of cohesion in the societies. These groups present themselves as superior because of their origins. The third is the nationalistic, the groups that aim at creating a new nation or separate from their state to join another state with the same national identity. The fourth is the revolutionary category, the groups that seek replacing the ruling regime with another political structure.

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<sup>26</sup> Cragin, K. (2009). *Understanding terrorist motivations*. Santa Monica: RAND.

<sup>27</sup> Army, U. S. (2007). *A military guide to terrorism in the twenty-first century*.

#### **D. Use of Media**

As it was mentioned above, a significant part of the terrorists' strategies rely on the reputation they gain through their successful operations, whether to gain sympathizers or to terrify the other side's population. Their successful use of media is the key mean in achieving these goals.

As the communication means have been developing through the recent years, moving the audience from the regular television networks to the internet and social media, the terrorist groups as well have been developing their use of media, relying more and more on the social networks. Unlike Al Qaeda in the 2000s, the terrorist groups now have more direct ways to send their messages to their audience rather than sending tapes to Arab television networks. Now, they can simply create their own channels to broadcast whatever messages they want. *"After the events of 9/11 and the antiterrorism campaign that followed, a large number of terrorist groups moved to cyberspace, establishing thousands of websites that promoted their messages and activities."*<sup>28</sup> (Weimann, 2014).

The scholars named some of the purposes that the terrorist groups utilize internet and social media in. These purposes include propaganda, recruitment, and training<sup>29</sup>. (Catherine and Rollins, 2011). More specifically, various uses of Facebook by the terrorist groups were mentioned:

*• As a way to share operational and tactical information, such as bomb recipes, weapon maintenance and use, tactical shooting, etc.*

*• As a gateway to extremist sites and other online radical content by linking on Facebook group pages and in discussion forums.*

*• As a media outlet for terrorist propaganda and extremist ideological messaging.*

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<sup>28</sup> Weimann, G. (2014). New Terrorism and New Media. Wilson Center Common Labs.

<sup>29</sup> Catherine, A. T., & Rollins, J. (2011, March). Terrorist use of the Internet: Information operations in Cyberspace. In CRS Report for Congress.

• *As a wealth of information for remote reconnaissance for targeting purposes.*” (Weimann, 2014).

In addition to recruiting through the chat rooms and the social networks, there are also the regular means that have been always used by the terrorist groups to gain new members; *“Terrorist recruiters know what to look for – young men who stand out in mosques and schools, who are devout, intelligent and have skills to offer.”*<sup>30</sup> (Bell, 2005)

It is important here to mention the value of following up on the terrorists’ activities on social media. These activities present a picture of the secret world of terrorism; *“there is clear intelligence value to be extracted from the ISIS accounts we examined. Although the volume of material created challenges in approaching this material systematically, the data analysis provided a number of clear insights. Most prominently, a significant number of accounts provided reliable GPS coordinates in ISIS territories.”*<sup>31</sup> (Berger and Morgan, 2015). However, there is uncertainty about the pros and cons of leaving or suspending the terrorists’ accounts on the social media. *“The information collected from the site was used by intelligence analysts to track the operational plans of jihadists, leading to arrests before the planned attacks could be executed. However, the website also was reportedly being used to transmit operational plans for jihadists entering Iraq to conduct attacks on U.S. troops. Debates between representatives of the NSA, CIA, DOD, DNI, and NSC led to a determination that the threat to troops in theater was greater than the intelligence value gained from monitoring the website, and a computer network team from the JTF-GNO ultimately dismantled it.”* (Catherine and Rollins, 2011).

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<sup>30</sup> Bell, S. (2008). *The martyr's oath: The apprenticeship of a homegrown terrorist*. John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>31</sup> Berger, J., & Morgan, J. (2015). *The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter*. The Brookings Project on US Relations with the Islamic World, 3, 20.



## E. Counterterrorism Strategies

As the influence of the terrorist groups was increasing, affecting the political and security decision making, the governments started to put plans and strategies to combat this effect. The scholars suggest a number of methods to deal with the terrorist groups.

The scholars asserted on the necessity of understanding the logic and motives of the terrorist attacks. According to Kydd and Walter, *“effective counterstrategies cannot be designed without first understanding the strategic logic that drives terrorist violence. Terrorism works not simply because it instills fear in target populations, but because it causes governments and individuals to respond in ways that aid the terrorists' cause.”* (Kydd and Walter, 2006).

Reducing the political utility of terrorism is a key factor in the counter terrorism strategies, in addition to mitigating *“terrorism by decreasing its political benefits via a strict no concessions policy decreasing its prospective political benefits via appeasement; or decreasing its political benefits relative to nonviolence via democracy promotion”* (Abrahams, 2008).

Moghadam, 2013, presents other detailed suggestions specifically for the innovative terrorist groups; *“thwarting the most innovative terrorist groups requires targeting senior- and middle-management operatives of the group itself and expending greater effort at apprehending independent terrorist innovators with fluid organizational affiliations. A mix of offensive and defensive counterterrorism strategies, coupled with greater international cooperation, is critical to achieving this goal.”*<sup>32</sup> (Moghadam, 2013)

While settling counter terrorism strategies, it is important to study the reasons and circumstances help or push the terrorists to involve in political violence. *“And because terrorism occurs in a particular*

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<sup>32</sup> Moghadam, A. (2013). How Al Qaeda Innovates. Security Studies, 22(3), 466-497.

*political and social context, combating it also requires addressing the underlying conditions that motivate it.*"<sup>33</sup> (Caldwell and Williams, 2012).

## **9. Methodology and Data Selection**

The paper uses a qualitative approach, exploring the armed groups' justification for their use of violence against civilian and military targets through analyzing the statements they issue and tracking the different and underlying messages that appear through them. The data is taken from the groups' websites, in addition to social media pages associated to or following the groups' activities.

The paper selects a number of armed groups operate in different areas and show different styles and levels of technicalities in their operations. That helps to avoid focusing on the same kinds of groups, which can lead to misleading results.

## **10. Limitations**

The major limitation in this study is the inability to verify the validity of the information and data presented through the groups' statements, in addition to which statements are really issued by the groups and which are not.

The paper does not aim at presenting the backgrounds of the armed groups or their ideologies; it presents the messages that appear in their statements and releases..

## **11. Data Analysis**

In this chapter, the paper presents a representative sample of videos and statements issued by the armed groups in Egypt after the ousted of Mursi. Through this material, the paper is trying to figure out the motives and justifications they present for their actions.

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<sup>33</sup> Caldwell, D., & Williams, R. E. (2012). *Seeking Security in an insecure world*. Rowman & Littlefield.

## **A. ISIL-Sinai Province**

ISIL in general has a highly sophisticated media department compared to other groups operating in Egypt. This appears in the quality of its releases, and the number of languages it sends its messages in. Sinai Province, formerly, Supporters of Al-Aqsa Mosque, or Ansar Beit El Maqdes, has a number of releases and videos issued in the aftermath of the operations it carried out, where it presents information about the operation, in addition to the reasons of why it conducted these operations and threats directed to its opponents.

The language Sinai Province uses in its releases is almost completely religious, going in the same line with ISIL style. However, the releases justify also the operations by mentioning the Egyptian authorities' violations (Grievances), as the group describes them. That is in addition to mentioning the opponents' actions against "Muslims" when it comes to attacking non-Egyptian targets, like the cases of the Russian plane, the Israeli city, and the Croatian citizen.

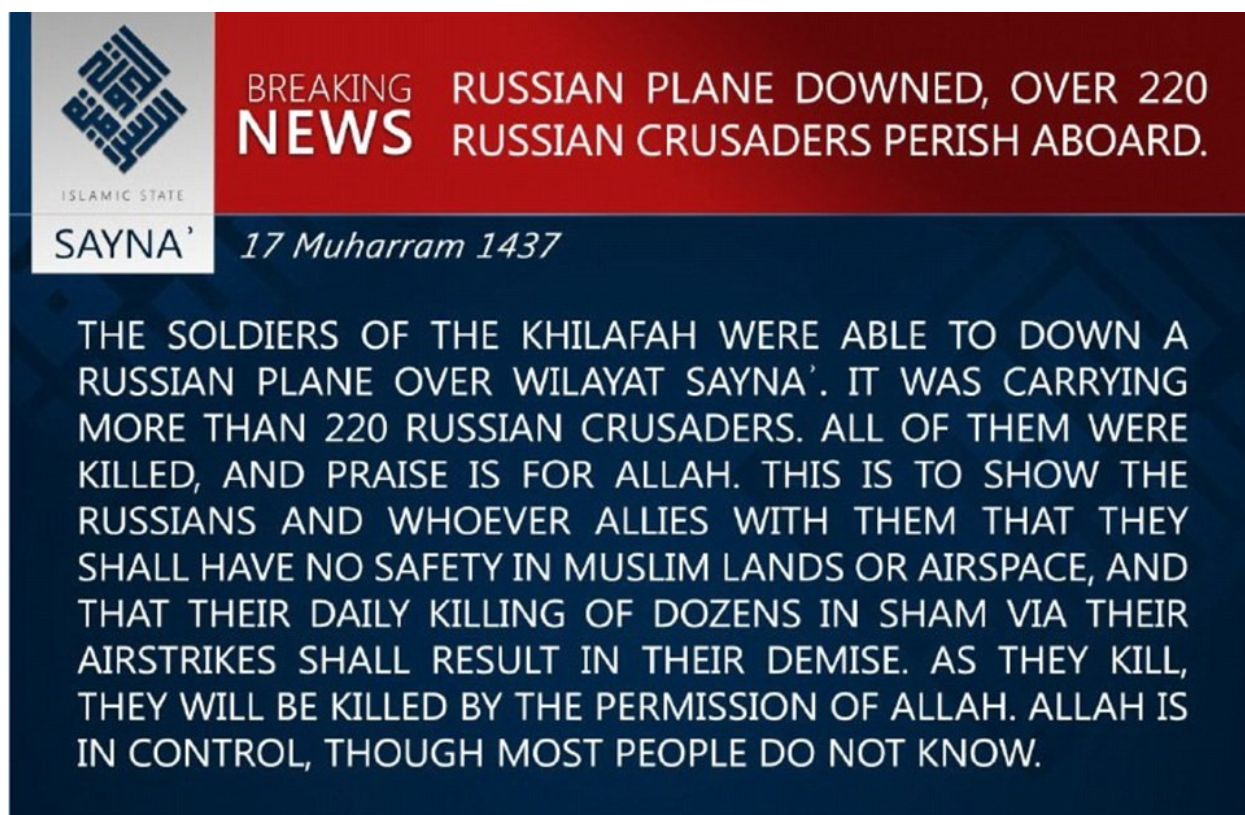
Unlike other groups, Sinai Province does not address what the opponents of the authority describe as the Egyptian army's treason, removing the Muslim Brotherhood from power. This could be explained through understanding their ideology that completely refuses the concept of democracy and elections.

The following is Sinai Province's statement followed the Russian plane crash in Sinai, in which it claims its responsibility for the incident:

*"17 MUHARRAM 1437 (30 October 2015)*

*THE SOLDIERS OF THE KHILAFAH WERE ABLE TO DOWN A RUSSIAN PLANE OVER WILAYAT SAYNA'. IT WAS CARRYING MORE THAN 220 RUSSIAN CRUSADERS. ALL OF THEM WERE KILLED, AND PRAISE IS FOR ALLAH. THIS IS TO SHOW THE RUSSIANS AND WHOEVER ALLIES*

*WITH THEM THAT THEY SHALL HAVE NO SAFETY IN MUSLIM LANDS OR AIRSPACE, AND THAT THEIR DAILY KILLING OF DOZENS IN SHAM VIA THEIR AIRSTRIKES SHALL RESULT IN THEIR DEMISE. AS THEY KILL, THEY WILL BE KILLED BY THE PERMISSION OF ALLAH. ALLAH IS IN CONTROL, THOUGH MOST PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW.”*

A graphic with a dark red top section and a dark blue bottom section. The top left contains the ISIL logo (a square with Arabic calligraphy) and the text 'ISLAMIC STATE'. To its right, in white text on the red background, is 'BREAKING NEWS' followed by 'RUSSIAN PLANE DOWNED, OVER 220 RUSSIAN CRUSADERS PERISH ABOARD.' Below the red section, on the left, is 'SAYNA'' and on the right, '17 Muharram 1437'. The main body of the graphic is dark blue with white text repeating the quote from the top of the page.

**BREAKING NEWS** RUSSIAN PLANE DOWNED, OVER 220 RUSSIAN CRUSADERS PERISH ABOARD.

ISLAMIC STATE

SAYNA' 17 Muharram 1437

THE SOLDIERS OF THE KHILAFAH WERE ABLE TO DOWN A RUSSIAN PLANE OVER WILAYAT SAYNA'. IT WAS CARRYING MORE THAN 220 RUSSIAN CRUSADERS. ALL OF THEM WERE KILLED, AND PRAISE IS FOR ALLAH. THIS IS TO SHOW THE RUSSIANS AND WHOEVER ALLIES WITH THEM THAT THEY SHALL HAVE NO SAFETY IN MUSLIM LANDS OR AIRSPACE, AND THAT THEIR DAILY KILLING OF DOZENS IN SHAM VIA THEIR AIRSTRIKES SHALL RESULT IN THEIR DEMISE. AS THEY KILL, THEY WILL BE KILLED BY THE PERMISSION OF ALLAH. ALLAH IS IN CONTROL, THOUGH MOST PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW.

**Figure 6. Supposedly ISIL's statement followed the Russian plane crash**

In this statement, it is clear how the group uses a religious language and justification; however, it also provides a nationalist justification: penalizing Russia for supporting Assad in Syria against ISIL through the air forces attacks.

In a similar statement, the group claimed responsibility for attacking areas controlled by Israel, without naming them. The statement attributes the attack to the Israelis' support for the Egyptian forces in the attack occurred couple of days before this incident, killing and injuring tens of soldiers<sup>34</sup>.

*“Islamic State*

*Sinai Province*

*Breaking News*

*16 Ramadan 1436 (2 July 2015)*

*Bombarding the Jewish-Captured Lands in the Occupied Palestine with Rockets*

*Thanks to God, the Jewish-captured lands in the occupied Palestine were bombarded with three Grad rockets. That is for their frequent crimes, most recently supporting the apostates (they call it the apostate army) in the foray of Al Sheikh Abi Shoayb Al Ansary”*

In this case also the group focuses on the nationalist justification, of course with the religious reasons. Such operations could be used to assert the regional nature of the dispute, and to stress on the group's ability to attack Israel in spite of the presence of the Egyptian forces in Sinai, which is one of the tactics used by the armed groups to show how weak is the authority when it comes to imposing control over the land, as it was mentioned before in the literature review.

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<sup>34</sup> Cunningham, E., & Morris, L. (2015, July 1). Militants launch major assault in Egypt's Sinai. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/militants-launch-major-assault-in-egypts-sinai-peninsula/2015/07/01/ceeff24d-67fc-4b14-88f7-f594c8dc3c53\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/militants-launch-major-assault-in-egypts-sinai-peninsula/2015/07/01/ceeff24d-67fc-4b14-88f7-f594c8dc3c53_story.html)



Figure 7. Supposedly ISIL's statement followed the attack on lands controlled by Israel

In August 2015, the group announced that it kidnapped a Croatian engineer working in Egypt. It made a video shows the hostage reading from a paper that he will be killed if the Egyptian authorities do not release what he called the “*Muslim women arrested in the Egyptian prisons*” before 48 hours.

<http://www.alalam.ir/news/1726845>

The video in the link above does not show any justification for kidnapping the Croatian citizen; however, later, a photo was published showing the, supposedly, Croatian hostage beheaded, with a comment saying “*Killing the Croatian hostage, whose his country participates in the war on the Islamic State, after the expiration of the time limit and after the Egyptian apostate government and his country, abandoned him*”. This could be seen as a nationalist justification as well, besides its obvious religious nature that appears in all the releases of ISIL.



Figure 8. Supposedly a photo of the Croatian hostage before and after being killed

Asserting on revenge again in its releases, the group circulated a document about blowing up the gas pipe-line that supplies gas to Jordan in December 2014. The justification was Jordan's participation in the war against the Islamic State. This can be classified as a nationalist justification, but that is in case it is agreed on that the Islamic State is a state.



Figure 9. Supposedly a statement announces blowing up the gas pipe-line to Jordan

*“Blowing up the gas pipe-line to Jordan, because of its participation in the war against the Islamic State”*



*“God willing, no gas drop will reach what is called Jordan state until the Commander of the Faithful (Khalifa) approves it”*

In November 2015, during the parliamentary elections, a number of judges were killed and injured in an explosion in their hotel in Suez City, of which Sinai Province claimed responsibility for the incident.

The below is the statement that was shared in the aftermath of the incident:

*“Breaking News*

*Operation against a pool of civil laws judges in a hotel in Suez*

*Sinai Province*

*12 Safar 1437 (24 November 2015)*

*In an operation God facilitated its causes, brother Abu Hamza El Muhager, may God accept him, exploded his car in the forces securing Suez Hotel in which 50 judges reside. Abu Hamza was followed by Abu Waddaa Al Muhager, may God accept him, who broke into the hotel with his machine weapon, and killed who God wanted him to kill, then exploded his explosive belt in their midst, which killed and injured a lot of them.*

*This operation comes as a reply on arresting and humiliating the Muslim women by the Egyptian apostate army in its checkpoints. We promise them, on God’s willing, that they will find what hurt them. God is in control, but most people do not know.”*

Although the statement did not mention a clear connection between the claimed army’s behavior and killing the judges, it was mentioned at the beginning of the statement that they are “civil laws

judges”, which is commonly rejected among the Islamist in general, considering it a rejection of what they call “God’s Laws”, or “Sharia Laws”.

In a related video, the group stressed on the same religious meaning of not letting people judge through their own laws, leaving the “sharia laws”<sup>35</sup>, presenting a recording for the operation, which again stresses on the importance of the role of media in their strategy. The video presents as well claims about the unfair sentences issued by the Egyptian judiciary.

This could be seen as a religious justification, but it also addresses grievance against the authority. Like the statements above, the religious factor is always underlined in all the group’s justifications.

The statement also shows that the group does not differentiate between the different bodies of the state. Whether army, police, or judicial body, they fight against them all.

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<sup>35</sup> Zelin, A. (2015, June 28). New video message from The Islamic State: "Liquidation of the Judges - Wilāyat Saynā" Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://jihadology.net/2015/06/28/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-liquidation-of-the-judges-wilayat-sayna/>

عملية نوعية على تجمع لقضاة  
القوانين الوضعية في فندق السويس

عاجل



ISLAMIC STATE

ولاية سيناء ١٢ صفر ١٤٢٧

في عملية نوعية يسر الله أسبابها، انطلق الأخ الاستشهادي أبو حمزة المهاجر -تقبله الله- ليديك بسيارته المفخخة قوة تأمين فندق السويس الذي يقيم به خمسون قاضيا، ليتبعه الأسد الانغماسي أبو وضاء المهاجر -تقبله الله- ويقتحم مقر القضاة بسلاحه الآلي ليقتل منهم ما شاء الله أن يقتل، ثم يفجر حزامه الناسف في وسطهم مما أدى لمقتل وإصابة الكثير منهم. وتأتي هذه العملية ردا على اعتقال جيش الردة المصري للنساء المسلمات وإهانتهم في حواجز الجيش المرتد، ونعدهم بإذن الله بما يسوؤهم، والله غالب على أمره ولكن أكثر الناس لا يعلمون.

Figure 10. Supposedly a statement by ISIL announces the attack against the judges

Talking about the grievance justification, the group, supposedly, published photos showing the destruction they claim was resulted by the army's operations in Sinai



Figure 11. A photo shows the claimed destruction done by the army

*“The indiscriminate bombing of the Egyptian apostate army targets the oppressed Muslims and their properties”*



**Figure 12. A photo shows the results of the claimed indiscriminate bombing by the Egyptian army**

*“Traces of ordinary Muslims’ blood as a result of hitting them by the indiscriminate bombing by the Egyptian apostate army”*



**Figure 13. A photo supposedly shows a child while receiving financial aid from ISIL**

*“Distributing money on the Muslims who were affected by collapsing and burning their houses by the apostate army”*

Some other times, the group’s statements do not provide a detailed justification, as in the case of Suez judges, but only mentions the kind of the target, which appears as a justification in itself, like the case of bombing the Italian Consulate in Cairo:

*“Through God’s blessing, Islamic State soldiers were able to detonate a parked car bomb carrying 450 kg of explosive material on the headquarters of the Italian consulate in central Cairo,”. “We recommend that Muslims stay clear of these security dens because they are legitimate targets for the mujahideen’s strikes.” (Reuters’ translation)<sup>36</sup>*

<sup>36</sup> GEORGY, M. (2015, July 11). Islamic State says behind bombing at Italian consulate in Cairo. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-blast-idUSKCN0PL05H20150711>



Figure 14. Supposedly a statement by ISIL announces the attack against the Italian consulate

The same occurred with striking the frigate of the Egyptian naval forces:

*“Islamic State*

*Sinai Province*

*Urgent: Destroying a Frigate of the Naval Forces of the Apostate Egyptian Army in the Mediterranean Sea*

*29 Ramadan 1436*

*In a blessed operation for which Allah facilitated its causes, the mujahideen were able to target a frigate of the naval forces of the apostate Egyptian army in the Mediterranean Sea, north of Rafah, and that was*

with a guided rocket. It led to its complete destruction and the elimination of all who were in it, and unto Allah is all praise and gratitude.” (SITE Intelligence Group’s translation)<sup>37</sup>.



Figure 15. Supposedly a number of photos published by ISIL show the attack on the Egyptian frigate

The revenge justification, which is also can be perceived under the grievance category, appears in the statement circulated about the attack on National Security building in Shobra El-Kheima district in Cairo.

The statement was titled “*In retaliation for the epic Arab Sharkas’ martyrs: Targeting the building of the apostate security (National Security) in Cairo with a bomb car*”. Arab Sharkas is the area where a deadly shootout occurred between militants and the security forces resulting in deaths. The statement stated that the group “*promised God not to rest while there is a prisoner or tortured in their*

<sup>37</sup> IS' Sinai Province Claims Destroying Egyptian Frigate in Mediterranean. (2015, July 16). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/is-sinai-province-claims-destroying-egyptian-frigate-in-mediterranean.html>

(police) *hands*”, with the regular religious descriptions they use in justifying their use of violence against the described targets.



Figure 16. Supposedly a statement by ISIL announces the attack against the National Security office in Shobra El-Kheima district

In conclusion, Sinai Province’s releases show that the group uses the three kinds of justifications: religious, nationalist, and grievance. However, even when it uses the nationalist and grievance justifications, it does so through a religious framework.

## B. Ajnad Misr (Soldiers of Egypt)



The group issued its first announcement claiming responsibility for attacks in January 2014<sup>38</sup>. Unlike ISIL, a lot of Ajnad Misr's operations took place in Giza and Cairo. The group targets mainly the security forces, providing a number of justifications for their operations.

The following dialogue appears at the beginning of a translated [video](#) titled as 'The Roaring of Explosives', supposedly produced by the group; it sounds like the dialogue was recorded through a wireless device during an operation.

*"How is the situation there?"*<sup>39</sup>

*The target arrived.*

*Are there Muslims around?*

*No, brother.*

*Execute."*

The first message here is that they do not target civilians.

Then the video presents a verse of the Quran addressing fighting, which asserts the religious nature of the group.. After that, the video presents photos of deaths, and arrested men and veiled women.

Voice of "Umar Abdur-Rahman may Allah release him": *"The Egyptian regime about which I know a lot took Islam as an enemy. It had taken and embraced every stand of enmity towards Islam and it had taken every stand that follows Islam as an enemy. This puppet regime takes the people of Islam and piety, and throws them in prisons and jails. It violates the honor of women. They drag them to police*

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<sup>38</sup> AWAD, M. (2014, September 18). Ajnad Misr: The Rise of Homegrown Egyptian Jihadists - The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://timep.org/commentary/ajnad-misr-rise-homegrown-egyptian-jihadists/>

<sup>39</sup> Almost all the translation is taken from the video

*departments. They hang them by their hands and legs. They tear the clothes, and curse them with the worst of expressions. All of this is committed while the Muslims are in a deep silence.”* The audio recording is a background of video scenes that show attacking veiled women.

A veiled female talks about girls/women, saying that there is a case *“was kidnapped by security forces and was attacked by people dressed in military and civilian clothing, then she was thrown in the street where a collective attack happened. The second case was also kidnapped, and was held in a police station. She was also collectively attacked by officers and soldiers. There are two cases, the last month, were raped 14 times in one day, in one of the Central Security Forces camps”*.

Then the video presents again the voice of Umar Abd El Rahman: *“What is wrong with you? What happened to you? What is the matter with you, that when you are asked to wage Jihad for the cause of Allah you cling heavily to the earth?”*

*“The Roaring of Explosives”* (Title)

*“In the punishment there is (saving of) life to you, O men of understanding”*

Then the video presents images and scenes for the bombing operations the group performed.

*“The Ajnad Misr Group announces that it infiltrated the strongholds of the Taghut (tyrant or unfair) Sisi, planting a bomb in front of the Qubbah Palace gate”*

Sound of *“The leade/Majd Ad-Deen Al-Misri – may Allah Protect him: I call you to something Allah legislated for you in his book, and the prophet incited in his sunnah. I ask you to defeat your honor, your religion, to regain your honor and repel the attacker who makes honors of people permissible, sheds blood, plunders the wealth, and works for the enemies. I call you to stand up with strength, not to delay the efforts to free the women who are detained in the prisons, and to deter everyone who extends his hands to them. It is not appropriate for the one who has remnant of manhood to enjoy living or sleeping while the women are going to bitterness of imprisonment and violations. I call*

*you to not let down the blood that was shed, and to take revenge for your brothers. I call you to not forget your friends who were arrested, and to work on rescuing them from the torture and hurt. I call you to perform the right that all laws guaranteed to you, and was even recognized by all man-made laws. I call you to an axiomatic and natural matter on which all people agreed: repel the one who transgresses against you, your religion, honor blood, and money.”*

Then the video writes “*Ajnad Misr, Protectors of the religion, blood, honor, and wealth. We are from you, and we came to you to defend you”*”.

The significance of this video in particular is that it presents the leader of the group while manifesting the group’s cause, which is not usual among the recent videos made by the armed groups. In addition, the video lists a number of points that could be perceived as justifications for its behavior, especially when putting them among the content of other messages that will be presented later in this paper.

Whether what the veiled girl/woman in the beginning of the video or what the claimed leader of the group said, both messages heavily focus on the claimed violations of the authority, and the right and call to defend the victims of these violations. That is in addition to addressing the government’s corruption, mentioning “*the one who transgresses against you, your religion, honor blood, and money”*”, and the attacker that “*plunders the wealth”*”. All of that is presented within a direct religious language. The message provided a special focus on the issue of violating women, which could be understood within the framework of demonstrating grievances, and at the same time stimulating the audiences’ anger against the authority.



Figure 17. A photo supposedly published by Ajnad Misr shows a claimed attack on a female university student and the result of an attack against officers who were ‘besieging’ the university

*“Yesterday, assaulting the chaste university students, and today, company of Ajnad Misr targets the officers besieging the university”*

*“Here I am at your service, sister .. we will not forget your revenge”*

In another [video](#) comes within a series of messages, supposedly, by the group entitled Al-Qisas (law of equality in punishment) is life, the following introduction came before showing scenes for violence performed by police personnel, as well as injuries and deaths resulted by operations targeted them: *“To every mother was hurt because of what happened to her sons on the hands of the criminal institutions, and her heart was broken while she was burying them, to every mother experienced the suffering of missing her son in the darkness of the prisons, and behind the bars of the oppressive jails, to every mother her son was injured, experienced the bitterness of treating him, and encountered his pains and sadness, we are honored to present this work to you, and we commit ourselves, our precious mother, that we will not save effort to rest your heart, eliminate your anger, and make you happy.”*

The message above asserts on the same meaning of taking revenge from the authority, represented by the security forces, for the claimed violations it committed against the “Mustadaafeen” (weak oppressed people), the term that the Islamists often use.

The group claimed responsibility for the bombing occurred in the vicinity of the Presidential Palace in Heliopolis in mid 2014, one of their important operations, for the significance of its location. The statement, Statement No. 9, that the group issued about this operation was concluded also by mentioning the “*brutal massacres*” and the “*torturing, raping and prisoning*” the authority commit against the “*people*”. This as well shows that the major justification Ajnad Misr provides for their use of force is the grievance, neither the religion, nor the nationalist justification. However, the fact that the statement starts with a Quran verse, and the language it was written in is a religious language to a great extent, mentioning God’s support, and praying to defeat the oppressors, indicates that the group relies on religion to present their behavior as legitimate.

بيان رقم : ٠٠٩  
التاريخ : ٢٠١٤/٠٦/٣٠  
الموافق : ١٤٣٥/٠٩/٠٢

# أجناد

حماة الدين والدم والعرض والمال

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### (( وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ))

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله، وبعد . . .

قال الله تعالى : ( فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتُمْ إِذْ رَمَيْتُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى )

فقد وفقنا الله سبحانه وتعالى بأن نجحت خطتنا في جر الأجهزة الإجرامية للفتح المنسوب لهم عند قصر الاتحادية، وكما بيئنا في بيئاتنا السابق أن تلك العملية كان يجب أن تنتفذ منذ عشرة أيام، وأن العبوة الرئيسية التي كانت تخترق تحصيناتهم تم إلغاء تنفيذها نظراً لتواجد أفراد بزى مدني بالقرب منها وذلك على غير المعتاد، وقد عثر عليها حراس القصر بعد عدة ساعات من إلغاء العملية وتكتموا عليها وكذبوا خبرها .

وقد قدر الله أن يُعصي أبصارهم عن بقية العبوات طيلة هذه الفترة حتى يمن علينا سبحانه في شهر رمضان بهذا التوفيق وأن يصيبهم في يومهم (٣٠/٦) فيقع فيهم هؤلاء الهلاكى والمصابين وينالهم بعضاً مما يقعون به بالأبرياء.

وأتت تلك العملية ضمن حملة (القصاص حياة) وقد استُخدمت فيها عبوات مبتكرة جديدة لا تجدي معها أجهزة التشويش ولا وسائلهم البالية، وقد ابتكر شبابنا الأبطال تلك العبوات بعد شهور من البحث والتجريب والاختبار والمتابعة لقدرات وتكتيات الأجهزة الإجرامية .

وإن استهدفنا لحصن سقاخهم بقصر الاتحادية لبيان أن ما دونه من مقرات وأفراد أسهل بكثير، وأن هذا النظام آيل للسقوط، وسينهار قريباً وستندحر كل أجهزته الإجرامية وستتحر مصر الكتانة من جرهم وجبروتهم بإذن الله، ولن يركع هذا الشعب إلا لخالفه ولن ينساق إلا لحكمه ولن يُحكم إلا بشرعه .

وقد أثبت هذا الشعب الأبي أنه عصي على كيدهم ومكرهم، فلم تُجد معه المجازر الوحشية ولا سلخانات التعذيب الهمجية ولا الاغتصابات وانتهاك الأعراس ولا اعتقال آلاف الشباب في سجونهم القمعية .

فُتحية إعراز وإكبار لأسرانا خلف القضبان وإنا لننتشر باهداكم تلك العملية المباركة، ونبشركم أن خلفكم رجال شابتون على دريكم وأن فكاه أسركم قريب جداً بإذن الله، وتعاهد الله أننا لن نخذلكم حتى يتم النصر أو نذوق ما ذاق حمزة بن عبد المطلب .

اللهم انذن لشرعك أن يسود واحفظ بلادنا من كل سوء وتقبل الشهداء واشف المصابين وفق أسر المعتقلين

اللهم والنصرنا على القوم الظالمين  
وأخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

twitter.com/ajnad\_misr\_am

Figure 18. Supposedly the ninth statement by Ajnad Misr dated by 30/6/2014

The same thing happened with another operation, when the group claimed responsibility for targeting security forces through explosive devices in Giza in February 2014. The statement, Statement No. 4, describes how the group monitored the movements of the “forces of the criminal bodies”, adding that “this blessed operation comes to assert on the previous messages that they are not safe from the revenge that chases them, and if the words can carry our messages to them, we would have not send it by explosive devices. The message that is needed to be sent to them is that we, God willing, will live with dignity, will not be led (like animals) by any tyrant despot, and will not rest until the justice and the Shura (advising or consulting) are applied, and the state is established over what God approves in his book (Quran) and in the Sunnah (teachings) of his prophet peace upon him”. The Statement was

concluded by saying that “our attacks against them will continue as long as their crimes are continuing”.

بيان رقم : 004  
التاريخ : 07/02/2014  
الموافق : 07/04/1435

# أجناد

حماة الدين والدم والعرض والمال

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

(( وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ))

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وبعد ...

فقد فتح الله على جنودنا الأبطال -اليوم الجمعة- بالوصول حمرة أخرى- إلى قلب مرتكزات الأجهزة الإجرامية وذلك ضمن حملة ((القصاص حياة)) حيث تم رصد تحركات قوات الأجهزة الإجرامية وتمت مراقبة أماكن تمرركزها التي تنطلق منها كل يوم جمعة لاستهداف الأبرياء بالقتل والتكيد، فتم زرع عبوتين ناسفتين حيث تتمركز قواتهم الإجرامية في "ميدان الجيزة" وتم متابعتهم حتى وصولهم إلى تمرركزهم وتم استهدافهم بالعوتين الناسفتين وكانت الإصابة مباشرة والحمد لله .

وتأت تلك العملية المباركة لتؤكد على الرسائل السابقة وهي أنهم ليسوا في مأمن من القصاص الذي يطاردهم، ولو أن رسالتنا إليهم تحملها الكلمات لما أرسلناها إليهم بالعيووات وإن الرسالة المراد إيصالها إليهم أننا جازن الله- سنجبا كراماً ولن نساقي من أي طاغوت مستبد، وأننا لن يقر لنا قرار حتى يعم العدل وتيسط الشورى وتقام الدولة على ما يرتضيه الله عز وجل في كتابه وفي سنة رسوله صلى الله عليه وسلم .

وإن غاراتنا عليهم ستتواصل مادام إجرامهم متواصل، ويفضل الله فإن البشرىات تتوالى وإن التصعيد مستمر على كافة الأصعدة وإن الانتفاضة تشتعل يوماً بعد يوم، وعلى كل من تبقى فيه بقية من شرف داخل الأجهزة الإجرامية أن ينشق عنها وأن يتوب إلى الله عز وجل وأن يكف عن حرب أهله ولينوجه سلاحه تجاه أجهزة الإجرام، ومن عجز عن نصرة الحق فلا ينصرن الباطل، ولا يكن في صف المجرمين فيخسر الدنيا والدين، وليبادر بالخروج من تلك الأجهزة الإجرامية قبل القدرة عليه فإن الأحداث تتسارع والفرصة قد لا تستمر طويلاً .

نسأل الله أن يحفظ بلادنا من كل سوء وأن ينتقل الشهداء ويشفي المصابين ويفك أسر المعتقلين

اللهم وانصرتنا على القوم الظالمين

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

facebook.com/ajnad.misr.am twitter.com/ajnad\_misr\_am

Figure 19. Supposedly the fourth statement by Ajnad Misr dated by 7/2/2014

In its 15<sup>th</sup> statement, in January 2015, a year after the establishment of the group, it talked about their fighting against the “criminal bodies” in 2014, and the efforts they did to take revenge from the authority for their claimed violations. The group focuses in this statement on what they mentioned in

their previous statements, that they do not target public transport or buildings, and that they are keen on the safety of the civilians around the locations they perform their operations in. The significance of this statement is that it declares clearly that the revenge “*will not be achieved through targeting the tyrant that gave order, or the soldier that executed, but from a complete regime, cutting it off from its roots, God willing*”. This can put the group among the insurgent movements, and takes it out from the terrorism category, if it is true that they target only the security forces, not the civilians, which is, according to the definition this paper adopts, the key factor needed to describe the use of violence as terrorism.

In conclusion, the vast majority of the available statements of Ajnad Misr provide the claimed violations of the authority as a justification for using violence, asserting on the revenge as a motive for their operations. At the same time, the group says that the way of applying justice is through changing the entire regime by using the armed violence against it. The group mainly provides justifications addressing the grievance; however, at the same time it mentions religious meanings, such as the God’s Law, but does not rely heavily on them, and both messages are provided through a direct religious language.

### **C. Revolutionary Punishment**

The movement was announced in 2015, claiming a lot of attacks against the police since then, especially in Fayyoun Governorate<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> AWAD, M., & HASHEM, M. (2015, October 21). Egypt's Escalating Islamist Insurgency. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://carnegie-mec.org/2015/10/21/egypt-s-escalating-islamist-insurgency/ijgn>



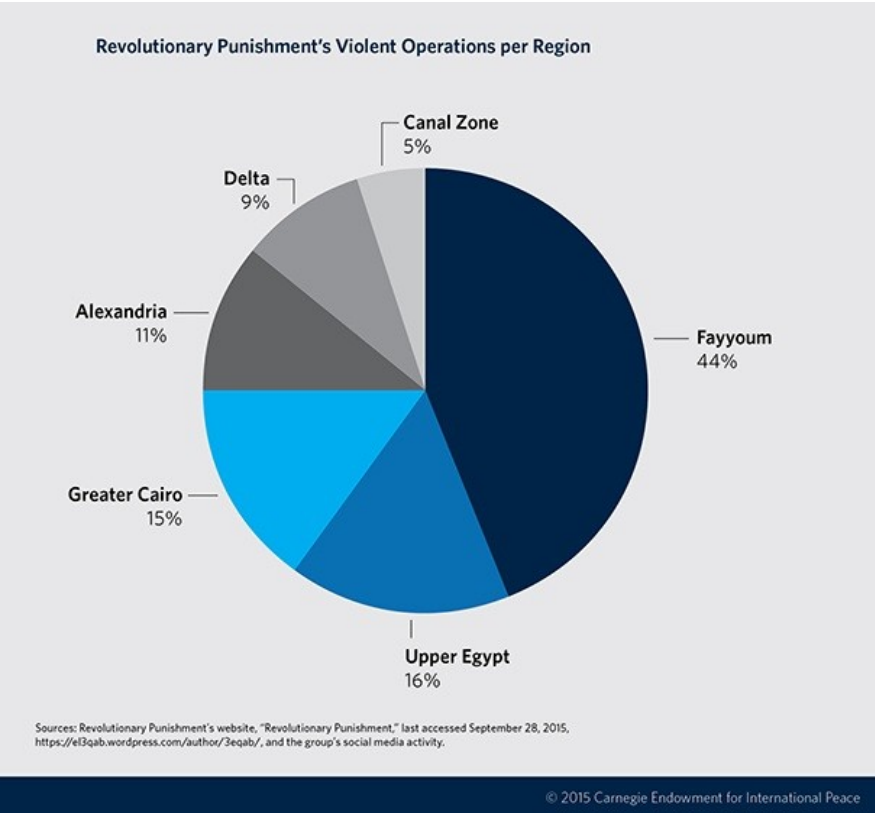


Figure 20. A chart shows Revolutionary Punishment’s violent operations per region

The below is their founding statement broadcasted through a [video](#), in which two masked men carrying what look like two AK guns appear:

*“In the name of the revolution, we, the revolutionary youth of Egypt, who are refusing all the forms of injustice and tyranny, and kidnapping the home, announce that we refuse what the revolution in Egypt reached, giving power to a wanton authority, an extension to the regime of the ousted Mubarak. This authority shed blood, killed people, displaced and brought poverty to the Egyptian people. We, the revolutionary youth of Egypt, announce that the complicated political scene Egypt is living now is a deviation from the revolutionary path and giving Egypt’s authority to the killers to kill more and more innocents, which requires putting an end for this collective massacre that started since January 25, 2011 and did not stop till now, passing through all the incident and massacres that the home witnessed. The one who executed it, the one who planned it, and the one who benefitted from it is the same. We, the revolutionary Egypt’s youth, announce that we are the major drive, and the first and continuous fuel of*

*the revolution, which has been lost by the political calculations, and looking for gains by the different actors. So these parties delivered the home again to the hands of the Askar (military personnel), to kill Egyptians and let the 'deep state' take revenge from everyone participated in the revolution. That is why we assure that we are totally away from any political calculations and that we will not submit to any bargain, extortion, or political temptation; we do not have any path but the revolutionary path. No solution for the complicated crisis in Egypt except through a comprehensive complete revolution to clean the home of dirty people. We, revolutionary Egypt's youth, announce that it is time for the revolution to take its right path to get rid of the dictator and repressive regimes that are working on burying the revolution. There is no way to get rid of the dictator regimes that direct their guns towards the revolutionaries' chests except through depriving them from their tools of power, and having the counter power that enables the revolution to win and revenge. Today, we launch the Revolutionary Punishment Movement to be a new establishment for the serious and real revolutionary work to rescue the home from the autocrats. We are fed up with slogans repeated over and over about the pacifism of the revolution in front of an armed authority understands nothing but the language of bullets. In the entire world, we did not find revolutions succeeded except through having the power that protects them. We, the Revolutionary Punishment Movement, announce forming structures for protecting the revolution in 15 governorates, till the moment of broadcasting the statement. We will complete our structures to be a solid core for the revolution, demolishing the fortresses of the oppression and injustice, and punish everyone thinks, from the armed bodies in the state, or the armed individuals or groups, to kill or kidnapping the revolution. The Movement executed a number of operations in different governorates, which will be announced consecutively. The blood of the martyrs and injured people is our priority in the first phases of our works. No criminal or cut-throat will escape. And for the killers, wait for unexpected surprises from us. The Qasas (revenge) is coming, and no sound is louder than the sound of gun in the legitimate revenge in a country that turned into a jungle. To all those who refuse to shed the blood of the innocents, and those who refuse the current authoritarian authority among the workers of the police, or those who affiliated to any armed entity supporting the current authority, we say to them to*

*immediately abandon their places. The confrontation with these armed institutions and entities that stole the revolution is the only path to restore the January revolution. The Movement will target directly all those with blood on their hands, and all those who target the revolution with weapons. So, save yourselves, before the Movement (kills/destroy) all of those.*

*Long live the Egyptian people's struggle.*

*Revolutionary Punishment Movement”*

The first thing can be observed in the statement above that it started with “*In the name of revolution*”, unlike the statements of the religious, or even semi-religious groups, that start with “*In the name of God*”. In addition, throughout the entire statement, the word “God” was not mentioned at all, or any other religious meaning. As for the word “Qasas” (revenge), although it is a religious term, it is a common term in the political context in Egypt, used by different people with different ideologies.

It is clear that the group adopted the grievance approach in presenting their justification for using violence against “*an armed authority understands nothing but the language of bullets*” that directs “*their guns towards the revolutionaries' chests*”. According to this statement, the group is clearly revolutionary that seek imposing control over the path of the revolution that according to their argument deviated from its path, in addition to changing the authoritarian regime. What is notable here is that the statement talks about the dictatorship and the authoritarian regime, did not mention at all the word “democracy”, which is a refused term in a wide sector of the Islamists. This could be an indicator that the group adopts a hidden religious ideology. The statements below can tell more about their beliefs.

*“Revolutionary Operations*

*Giza: Trap for a Security Column*

*The heroes of the Revolutionary Punishment in Giza Governorate succeeded to make a trap for a column affiliated to the police of Camp David on Thursday, morning, September 24, 2015 (the first day of Adha feast).*

*One of the punishment groups accurately monitored the security column and determined the points of engagement, then the heroes of the punishment opened their fires on Camp David's cowards, which led to injures and losses in the column's forces. We were not able to accurately know these losses. Our heroes came back safe.*

*The Revolutionary Punishment*

*We Did Not Forget .. We Will Not Forgive .. We Swear That We Will Revenge*

*Cairo, September 25, 2015”*

The statement above tells nothing about any religious background. Like the founding statement, it focuses on taking revenge from the authority represented by the police. The fact that the group mentioned many times the “Camp David” police refers to their objection on the Egyptian-Israeli relations; however, it is still not enough to consider that the group’s efforts is directed to change anything related to Egypt’s foreign relations.

In September 2015, the group announced that it seriously injured a number of security personnel, one of which took a bullet in his jaw and chest. The statement in which the group announced the operation included the following: *“Camp David’s police, with all their coward elements, will remain a legitimate target for us and will remain in the range of punishment, this police that did not keep on the sanctity of women, assaulted them, and arrested some of them in a miserable despicable scenes; perhaps the history did not mention something like them in the past or present.*

*They thought it to be a light matter .. but we swear to the one who forbade these honors to be touched (God) that the price they will pay is their lives.*

*The Revolutionary Punishment*

*We Did Not Forget .. We Will Not Forgive .. We Swear That We Will Revenge*

*Cairo, September 1, 2015”.*

The statement above also mentions the violations of the authority against the people, focusing on the claimed violations against women, very similar to Ajnad Misr. What is different in this statement than the statement previous, and the founding statement, is the language it was written in. Besides mentioning God “*who forbade these honors to be touched*”, the phrase “*thought it to be a light matter*” is actually part of a Quran verse (and ye thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah)<sup>41</sup>. This can indicate a possible religious background, but sure it is still not enough to consider it as a religious group.

*“Revolutionary Operations*

*Fayyoun: field execution to a killer police personnel*

*One of the Revolutionary Punishment groups in Fayyoun executed a police personnel in the coup’s Ministry of Interior called Ahmed Younes. ... He is one of those involved in assaulting the revolutionaries, and participated in the killing operations the Ministry of Interior perform against the revolutionaries. The group was able to monitor him and opened fire on him in Fayyoun, killing him.*

*The Revolutionary Punishment*

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<sup>41</sup> Holy Qur'an: Arabic with parallel English translation. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/book/24.html>

*We Did Not Forget .. We Will Not Forgive .. We Swear That We Will Revenge*

*Cairo, July 2, 2015”.*

The same justification of revenge and grievance appears in the statement above, and also without providing any religious reasons for their behavior, asserting on mentioning the “coup” while talking about the claimed police crimes.

*“Revolutionary Operations*

*Asyut: Targeting Assistant Interior Minister*

*A group of Revolutionary Punishment heroes in Asyut succeeded in implanting a very explosive device in front of the office of the coup’s Minister of Interior Assistant for North and Middle Upper Egypt in the vicinity of the building of the National Security (dogs). The group executed the bombing operation on Tuesday 18/8/2015, dawn, in 4:30 AM.*

*The operation led to a huge explosion resulted in crashing a police car, and some other cars of the officers and those who work in the National Security. The explosion raised panic among the forces that secure the building, and led to high-alert situation.*

*This is few of the many that we have prepared for you and soon you will see it with your eyes, penalty for the injustice and the arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture you perform against this revolutionary people.*

*The Revolutionary Punishment*

*We Did Not Forget .. We Will Not Forgive .. We Swear That We Will Revenge*

*Cairo, August 18, 2015”.*

The above is another sample for the justifications the group provides for using violence. What is worth mentioning in this statement is that it describes the police as the police of the “coup”, the term that is always used by the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The term is repeated in several statements by the group. It is very unlikely to find this term in the statements of the radical extremist groups, like Sinai Province, for they do not believe in the religious legitimacy of Mohamed Mursi as a president. It is also unlikely to find it in the statements of the unreligious or secular groups who were opposing the Islamists when they were in office. However, using the term “coup” does not change the fact that the group provides unreligious justifications for their use of violence, presenting grievance and revenge as their motives.

On a side note, the style of the Arabic language the statements are written in could be seen as somehow similar to the language people with Islamic religious background use: the unusual terms, the complicated sentence structures, and the relatively high-level grammar. Although this is not an evidence for anything, it still counts when it comes to trying inferring the group’s background.

In conclusion, the Revolutionary Punishment Movement shares the grievance justification with Sinai Province and Afnan Misr. However, it does not provide the religious justification that both groups heavily rely on, at least in a direct way, in all their available statements. Although the real political orientation of the group is not clear, there are observations that can indicate a religious background. For example, in June 2015 the group broadcasted an audio [recording](#) through Soundcloud entitled “*The Harvest of Punishment .. The Coming is bitterer*”. The background of the recording was the beginning of a chant, with no music. The rest of the [chant](#), which does not appear in the recording, includes a part says “*fight the call of the disbelief in all the forts*”, the same kind of message in the ‘Jihadi’ discourse. However, it is rare to find any religious talk in the group’s statements.

So, as for the subject of this paper, the group does not provide religious justifications for their use of violence, but clear grievance justifications, away from any possible hidden motives they adopt.

#### **D. Popular Resistance**

In August 2014, coinciding with the first anniversary of breaking up the Islamists' sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda squares in Cairo, the Popular Resistance Movement broadcasted its first statement through a [video](#), in which an un-bearded man appears, telling the statement, with a musical background at the beginning of the video. The group claimed responsibility for a number of operations<sup>42</sup> attacking civil and military targets<sup>43</sup>.

The below is the message<sup>44</sup> appears in the video:

*“Since the situation is getting worse, and since injustice, darkness and destruction is widespread, and in the shadow of the absence of retribution against the murderers of the freedom revolutionaries since January 25 until today, we the men, the men of Egypt, have decided to confront the stubborn Mubarak regime with all we possess of popular support and with all advanced methods.*

*It may raise eyebrows that our first communique is released on the first anniversary of the storming of the Rabaa and Al-Nahda sit-ins. To prevent our lousy media from jumping to all sorts of conclusions, we would like to say the following:*

*This entity, which we are launching today officially under the name of The Popular Resistance Movement - Egypt, is the fruit of several months of effort, prior to any anniversary that saw the start of*

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<sup>42</sup> Harvest of the Popular Resistance's Operations for Thursday 14 August. (2014, August 14). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.prm-egypt.org/stat/view?i=stat1408201402>

<sup>43</sup> Operations. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.prm-egypt.org/operations>

<sup>44</sup> The translation is taken from Middle East Monitor <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/13495-the-first-communique-of-the-popular-resistance-movement>



*our resistance against the despotic military rule in Egypt. This was the outcome of knowing that two revolutions have not been sufficient to bring about change. The first was disrupted while the other was aborted. A counterrevolution was superimposed. We knew we had to sacrifice more blood in order to earn a decent living and we had to ride on more thorns in order to enjoy freedom, and we had to pay a big price in order to gain social justice.*

*Proclaiming this new resistance entity is a purely Egyptian desire to unite the efforts of Egyptians who are resisting across the country for one principal objective and using similar methods and various decentralized entities.*

*O free resistance men*

*Your movement, the Popular Resistance Movement - Egypt, conveys to you in its first communique the good news of the coming together of several groups that engage in deterring the military in the Cairo Governorate. They have united under the name of: Martyr Muhammad Helmi Groups - Cairo. We promise to keep you updated through new communiqués to tell you the good news soon from all governorates, God-willing. The first news comes today of a quality operation executed by the Popular Resistance Movement - Egypt.*

*O people*

*We fear Allah and we shall not seek to incur his wrath. We proceed confidently ahead with what we have of the painful tools of popular resistance, tools that will strip the murderers who have taken control of the destiny of the nation of the tools of murder and will deny them sleep, comfort and happiness, and will deny them the false victories they delude each other about.*

*We shall not remain silent regarding the murder weapons they use to slit the throats of our people nor shall we remain indifferent regarding the hunger they have imposed on all of us while the murderers lavish in their palaces and castles hiding from us behind their guards.*

*Whoever from among the thugs stays inside his home, he is safe; whoever from among the military dogs stays in his palace, he is safe; and whoever attacks, let him then blame none but himself.*

*We shall seek to do the impossible until the demands of this generation are met. We shall pay willingly with our blood until we crush the lackeys of Israel. Retribution for the martyrs is our right, and we shall eventually attain it. So long as people seek their rights, their rights will not be lost.*

*Allah .... Martyrdom ..... Revolution*

*The Command Group*

*Martyr Muhammad Helmi Groups – Cairo”*

The first things can be observed in the video is that it includes music, which is prohibited in the Islamist radicals’ beliefs. In addition, the group chose an un-bearded young man to send their first message, which as well indicates their background, or at least the background they want the audiences to believe they come from.

Like the messages of the three previous groups, the message focuses on the grievance against the authority, mentioning the injustice, and the lack of legal punishment against the *“the murderers of the freedom revolutionaries”*. The statement does not provide clearly the orientation of the group, mentioning the *“desire to unite the efforts of Egyptians who are resisting across the country for one principal objective and using similar methods and various decentralized entities.”*. This could be seen as just a tactic used by the group to make it more difficult for the authority to track the group’s elements. However, it can imply that the group does not really have one ideology, since the justifications and targets mentioned in the statement are shared among a lot of groups, and that it is just an entity to connect different groups seeking to achieve the same goal. Talking about Mubarak’s regime<sup>45</sup>, freedom, and social justice is common among many groups, including the religious ones. What can be understood

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<sup>45</sup> The opposition often accuses the current regime that it is an extension of Mubarak’s regime.

from this statement is that the group is a revolutionary movement that seeks changing the regime, using the grievance justification. However, like the Revolutionary Punishment, this does not mean that there are no religious motives or backgrounds behind the unreligious language used in the statement. The letter "ج" (G/J) in Arabic has two pronunciations, one as in “gate”, and one as in “George”. The Islamists, and people with Islamic religious background in Egypt, often pronounce it as in “George”, which happened in the statement. This can be an indication for their background, especially when it is put with “*We fear Allah and we shall not seek to incur his wrath*”. However, using a religious language does not change the fact that the statement does not provide a religious justification for their operations, at least directly.

*“Operation Honor of Egypt*

*In the name of God*

*Pure women of Egypt, and its free girls,*

*This poor people had to hope the resistance movement to give it back some of its right, of which it sees them violated in all times.*

*Labors’ rights were ran over, peasants’ rights were forgotten, peddlers’ rights were scattered, martyrs’ rights were neglected, and injured people’s rights were left.*

*As for the great disaster, it was the killing, dragging, and murders against the chaste girls, and the honorable women. Moreover, the violations reached committing raping against them by a murder villainous military regime.*

*O putschist, our patience came to an end and life will remain with no meaning as long as the free women/girls of Egypt are behind bars, more than 50 of Egypt’s free women and girls; we will not leave them behind bars.*

*So we decided the following:*

*First, a decision by the popular resistance to set free all Egypt's political detainees girls.*

*Second, we do not recognize the claims of the Askar's (military personnel) regime that there is no single political detainee in the prisons. We assert that what the people sees is what will be, not the perception of the blind regime!*

*Third, the military regime has to take full responsibility for all what will happen to it for delaying the execution of the Movement's decision of releasing all the women/girls political detainees.*

*O free resisters ..*

*All of you, united, will play in this stage with honor to defend your honors, so let them see how the men look like and let them see where the weapon is directed.*

*O people ..*

*We remind you that our honorable battle is for defending you against military personnel who do not care much about your simple needs as long they terrify you with weapons and as long as you fear of them. Our message to them is that there are men in Egypt do not know what the fear is and that they always confronted with honor.*

*The Askar's state is not in safe as long as Egypt's honor is not safe and we, with God's grace, are able to do what we say.*

*Allah .... Martyrdom ..... Revolution*

*The Popular Resistance Movement - Egypt*

*The Command Group .. Martyr Muhammad Helmi Group – Cairo”*

*24-9-2014”*

The statement above, one of the few prolonged statements on the group's website, as well focuses on the grievance and revenge justifications. What is notable in this statement is the poor Arabic language it was written in, unlike Sinai province's language for instance, which can indicate the unprofessionalism of the group.

The below are samples for the justifications the group, Giza Branch, provides for their filmed<sup>46</sup> operations:

*"The resistance sets fire in the gate and the room of the Administrative Security of Faculty of Engineering, Menufeyya University as a reaction to firing/suspending the students"*<sup>47</sup>

*"Knights of the Popular Resistance in Giza rise up for the free girls of Azhar (university) and start their anger by blocking the ring road. Wait for what is coming; we have had enough"*<sup>48</sup>

*"Knights of the resistance in Badrasheen block the railway track as a reaction to the Ministry of Interior's assault against the march"*<sup>49</sup>

*"Burning one of the cars affiliated to Giza Governorate as a Qasas (punishment) for Nahya (area) massacre"*<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Popular Resistance in Giza Channel. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIUk7tP1sPrMpo6yUUSLhMQ>

<sup>47</sup> The resistance sets fire in the gate and the room of. (2015, March 8). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb9qE8FIc5U>

<sup>48</sup> Knights of the Popular Resistance in Giza Revenge for the Free Girls of Al-Azhar Blocking the Ring Road, and Wait for What is Coming 19-11-2014. (2014, November 19). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAOpvifu-4k>

<sup>49</sup> Knights of the resistance in Badrasheen block the railway track. (2014, November 14). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6tXabRIrjI>

*“Knights of the resistance destroy the frontage of CIB<sup>51</sup> for cooperating with the pigs of Falcon<sup>52</sup>, and this is the punishment of everyone cooperates with the killers. Wait for what is coming”<sup>53</sup>*

*“Popular Resistance in 6 October City sets fire in a car affiliated to the (dogs) of Ministry of Interior as a reaction to kidnapping the students from the universities, and the frequent violations of Sisi’s militias”<sup>54</sup>*

*“Men of Popular Resistance in Giza block Haram Street as a reaction to the murders of Askars’ (military) ( dogs)”<sup>55</sup>*

*“Men of Popular Resistance in October block Gamal Abd El-Nasser Road as a reaction for the assaults of yesterday”<sup>56</sup>*

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<sup>50</sup> Knights of the resistance in Haram Set Fire in a Car Affiliated to. (2014, November 14). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LtPgspJz0g>

<sup>51</sup> Commercial International Bank

<sup>52</sup> A security firm was/has been operating in public universities

<sup>53</sup> Knights of the resistance destroy the frontage of CIB for Cooperating with the Pigs of Falcon. Retrieved January 9, 2016, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgB-9\\_RTh40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgB-9_RTh40)

<sup>54</sup> Popular Resistance in October Adopts Burning a Police Car as a Reaction to Kidnapping the Students from the Universities. (2014, November 4). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Msw4Q5DDpQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Msw4Q5DDpQ)

<sup>55</sup> Honor of Egypt Campaign/ Knights of the Popular Resistance in Giza Block the Major Haram Street. (2014, November 2). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sEdHJYDrNU>

<sup>56</sup> Popular Resistance in Giza Block October block Gamal Abd El Nasser Road as a reaction for the assaults of yesterday. (2014, October 29). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZlsvYAIyyM>

*“Nissan, Mitsubishi, Chevrolet, Ghabbour”<sup>57</sup> companies, you manufacture the (killing Egyptians) cars. The message is for you and for everyone helps the forces of the coup to murder, you are the same for us ... the end”<sup>58</sup>*

All the above statements assert on the same meaning of grievance and revenge without mentioning any religious meanings, or addressing any cross-border issue or cause.

In conclusion, the group uses violence against civil and military targets under the justification of combatting the injustice regime that violates the rights of the people, the grievance justification. The background of the group does not appear enough through its statements. However, the group uses terms that are common among a wide sector of the Islamists, such as “coup forces” in describing security forces operate under the command of the current regime. As for the use of media, the group does not seem that it has a sophisticated media department; for example, this can be seen in the level of language used in their statements.

#### **E. Helwan Brigades (Kataeb Helwan)**

Kataeb Helwan is not a real active armed group; their major presence was in a video broadcasted in August 2014. About 10 armed masked men appear in the video<sup>59</sup>, one of which speaks directly towards the camera. The below is the message<sup>60</sup> appears in the video:

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<sup>57</sup> Egyptian automotive company

<sup>58</sup> The Companies of Blood (Nissan-Mitsubishi-Chevrolet-Ghabbour) Popular Resistance in Giza. (2014, August 29). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrEkpYmK68E>

<sup>59</sup> Helwan Brigades The First Statement. (2014, August 14). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnELpIhtwQ0>

<sup>60</sup> The translation is taken from Middle East Monitor <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/13478-the-first-appearance-of-the-hilwan-brigades-we-are-fed-up-with-the-peacefulness-of-the-muslim-brotherhood>

Masked man speaking to the Camera:

*“.....in Sinai, at Rabaa, at Al-Nahda, at the Republican Guards, at the Platform, at the Monument and elsewhere, we dealt with the Interior Ministry with peace and we treated the army with peace. We proclaimed it to be peaceful. We paid with blood what we paid and we paid with our banishment what we paid until we became fed up with the peacefulness of the Muslim Brotherhood. We are not [members of the] Muslim Brotherhood. We got fed up with their peacefulness in rallies and other activities.*

*We would go out and then the blood is shed, women are raped and properties are stolen [by security forces]. This is a warning to the Interior Ministry in South Cairo. This is what we can afford [for the time being], at the level of south Cairo in all its zones and divisions: you will be targeted. This is what we shall say: you are to be targeted for what you have done to us. You have not feared the Almighty Allah. You have shown no consideration for the fact that we are your brothers. You have shown no consideration for anything. You have shed the bloods and stepped on them. You have raped the women. You have impregnated the Muslim women.*

*We have not heard anyone from amongst you object to these actions or call perpetrators to account.*

*That is because you are coup perpetrators and because this army of yours is the army of Camp David for what it has done to the Muslims, that has been doing this to the Muslims for 60 years. Not a single bullet was fired against the [Israeli] Jews, and when they first fired, the soldiers aimed at their own folks, at their brothers and sisters, and at their own people. For 60 years, what did the army do? Our life has been full of misery and misery and misery and poverty, poverty, poverty. We can only complain to God.*

*And the people are the ones who pay the price. The people pay the cost. There has to be a group of people who seek to exact justice and respond to what these [troops] have perpetrated and what the Interior Ministry in particular have done. They have forgotten January 25 and the day of rage on January 28. They have forgotten what the people did with them. Rather than reconcile themselves with*



*the people they took a hostile position. Why? You think that the army will protect you? OK, do what you want to do please. You did what you did and now you compel peaceful people like us to carry arms.*

*We did not want to carry arms but you are the ones who forced us to resort to it to defend ourselves, to defend our women, to defend this land. We want what is best for Egypt, we love Egypt and wish it well and we wish the people well. We seek justice. We seek equality. We want to see piety in this country. We want what is good for this country. We would be willing to lay down these arms and hand them over the army if the army is willing to fear God, but the army is aiding the Interior Ministry in killing us and is aiding the Interior Ministry in raping women. It is aiding the Interior Ministry in 'torture parties', and there are so many of them [posted] on YouTube and on the net, torture parties that take place in police stations across the country. We seek refuge and help from God.*

*Another masked man shouting and other masked men repeat behind him: No peace with the Interior Ministry, No peace with the Interior Ministry, No peace with the Interior Ministry.*

*Takbir: Allaho Akbar. We do it for the sake of God.”*

Although the group did not adopt any violent operations against anything before, it still gives an image of the justifications provided by the individuals and groups that use, or are ready to use, violence. Supposedly, hundreds of the group's members got arrested<sup>61</sup>. The message appeared in the video seems similar to a great extent to the messages of Afnad Misr: focusing on grievances and violations through a religious language. The 'group' neither mentioned directly a religious justification, like imposing God's Law for example, nor a cause associated with combatting an outsider, like what Sinai Province does.

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<sup>61</sup> In Pictures: Helwan Brigades trial postponed. (2015, December 6). Retrieved January 9, 2016, from <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/12/06/in-pictures-helwan-brigades-trial-postponed/>

## 12. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper presented briefly the beginnings of the religious armed violence in Egypt through its modern history, presenting the development of the armed groups' activity under the different political regimes. The paper presented as well the dramatic change occurred in the political and security arena in 2010s, specifically after the Islamists took and left office.

It showed the different scholars' opinions about the terrorist and armed groups, their strategies, use of media, in addition to the criteria used to define terrorism, and the counterterrorism strategies.

The paper explored mainly the behavior of five armed groups in Egypt through their statements: ISIL-Sinai Province, Afnad Misr, Revolutionary Punishment, Popular Resistance Movement, and Helwan Brigade. The aim is to show what kind of justification(s) do the armed groups use while presenting their operations.

The paper found that ISIL-Sinai Province uses the three kinds of justifications, the religious, nationalist, and grievance justifications. The group focuses on the religious justification in particular that even when it uses the nationalist or the grievance justifications it does so through a religious language.

As for Afnad Misr, the paper found that the vast majority of their 15 available statements stress on the claimed violations the authority committed as a justification for using armed power against it. The groups' statements show as well sympathy with the people who do not affiliate to the governmental forces. That can be seen in aborting missions because there are civilian-dressed-people in the operation field. Through its direct religious language, the group says that the way of applying justice in Egypt is by changing the entire regime through the armed power. Unlike Sinai Province, Afnad Misr does not rely heavily on religion while justifying its behavior; however, it mentions religious meanings like God's Law. The paper concludes that if it is true that the group directs its use of force against the governmental forces only, aiming to change the regime, then it would not be a terrorist group, according to the definition of terrorism that the paper adopts. Rather, it would be an insurgent movement.

The third group the paper studied is the Revolutionary Punishment Movement. The group's justification for their use of violence is the grievance against the authority, for the violations they commit against the people. The group does not provide religious reasons for its behavior. However, there are clues in their statements and media productions may refer to a religious background, but as for their statements, they focus on the grievance justification.

Like the three previous groups, the Popular Resistance Movement focuses on the grievance justification as a core justification in their statements. The group attacks civil and military targets under the justification of combatting the regime that violates the human rights of the people, not mentioning any religious reasons or defending any nationalist causes.

The fifth case the paper studied is the so called Helwan Brigades, or Kataeb Helwan. The paper did not find that the group adopted any operations against any kind of targets. However, the group was presented as an example for the groups that are ready to perform violence in Egypt.

The single video the group broadcasted carried the grievance justification, like the four previous groups. The group presented its message through a religious language, but did not claim that it will use violence for religious reasons.

In conclusion, the paper suggests that grievance is the most common justification the armed groups in Egypt provide for they use of violence, especially prisoning girls and women, depending on the studied sample. The researcher did not have a clear vision at the beginning about the expected results. However, it is a surprise to find a group like Ajnad Misr almost does not mention religion at all, and just rely on addressing grievances and violations committed by the authority, in spite of the obvious religious appearance of the group.

Since the justification appears in the majority of the analyzed statements is the grievance justification, the paper suggests that the state should focus on addressing these claims through disproving them in case they are not true, in order to deprive the armed groups of more possible supporters and

sympathizers. On the other hand, if these claims are true, the state should find another way to handle the political turmoil rather than using violence and violating human rights, which is often appears in the statements as a major reason for their violence. This would break the circle of the continuing violence and counter-violence carried out by the state on one side and the armed groups on the other side.

As for the groups that use religious justification, the state should put a huge effort, and a long-term plan to address and deconstruct the fanatic ideas they rely on. This could be conducted through a comprehensive restructuring for the religious education provided in Egypt, in addition to intensive media campaigns showing other interpretations for the religious texts that these groups rely on in supporting their claims. This plan needs also to be in cooperation with the other countries with majority Muslim communities, since the religious ideas and ideologies are easily transferred among people from the same religion.

Moreover, the Egyptian government has a successful experience with the de-radicalization process conducted with the radical prisoners in the 1990s. That process “took around 15,000 to 20,000 IG (The Islamic Group) militants away from the Salafi-Jihadi camp currently led by al-Qa’ida.”<sup>62</sup> (Ashour, 2007). Such process is needed to be adopted as a strategy, for imprisoning those involved in armed violence or affiliated to armed groups cannot ensure alone that they would de-attach from their previous behavior after finishing their prison sentences.

All this should go in parallel with security campaign working on eliminating the funds they receive, and filling the power vacuum in the remote areas that are used as safe bases for these groups, like in Sinai.

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<sup>62</sup> Ashour, O. (2007). Lions Tamed? An inquiry into the causes of de-radicalization of armed Islamist movements: The case of the Egyptian Islamic Group. *The middle east Journal*, 61(4), 596-625.

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