

## **APPENDIX A**

### **CASE STUDIES OF REGIONAL TERRORIST GROUPS**

- I. Al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI)**
- II. Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EJIM)**



## **I. Somalia's al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI; Islamic Union)**

### The Rise of al-Ittihad al-Islami

*Al-Ittihad al-Islami* (The Islamic Union) is one of the most widely discussed Islamist groups from the Horn of Africa, yet its ties to the global jihadi movement remain obscure. The lack of clarity stems from the fluidity of organizational alliances in Somalia; it is often difficult to confirm formal ties between jihadi groups, and this is particularly true in the Somali landscape. Despite that fact, AIAI it is known to have had ties at the highest levels of leadership to global jihadi groups, including al-Qa'ida.

Now essentially defunct, the group rose to prominence in the 1980s and its influence peaked in 1992; yet its leadership remains active in Somalia and does present a threat for further al-Qa'ida influence in the country. Al-Ittihad was established in the early 1980s through the merger of Salafi groups that enjoyed popularity in Somalia in the 1960s and 1970s, largely as a result of their attempts to regain lost Somali land after independence and resistance to dictator Siad Barre and Western influence. As such, they gained the support of the Somali people through nationalist causes more than through a common affinity for Salafism; indeed the ideology was widely unpopular in the county in previous years.

Salafi ideology was first introduced to Somalia in the 1940s by scholars trained in Saudi Arabia. Somali Muslims were predominately Shafi'i Sunnis and there was a long-standing tradition of Sufism in the Horn of Africa, making it initially a difficult grounds for the ideology to spread. Local scholars issued fatwas banning Salafi ideology from being propagated. With independence in 1960, however, political tendencies had changed. The Somali government looked to the West for technical assistance in modernizing as Islamic revivalist movements influenced by Salafism, namely the Muslim Brotherhood, called for resistance to Western influence, coinciding with traditional scholars' frustration with Western involvement in the country.

The oil boom of the 1970s and 80s brought Somali workers to the Gulf, the majority of them to Saudi Arabia. Reportedly thousands of Somalis were also offered scholarships during these years to study at Saudi institutions, and most ended up at the three most prominent Salafi educational institutions—the Islamic University of Medina, Umm al-Qura` in Mecca and Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh. This development, along with the changing internal dynamics in Somalia, transformed the country from one hostile to Salafi thought into one receptive to its order, militancy, and vision for a rigid implementation of Islamic law.

Some of the nascent Salafi centers, in the suburbs of Mogadishu and in northern Somalia in particular, began to gain a steady following of worshippers, coming to daily prayers but also seeking instruction on *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), and regular lectures on a variety of religious, social and political issues. Like most other Salafi movements, these were focused on doctrinal matters and attempting to instill an understanding of the *shari'a* in its followers, creating a loyal segment of Somali society dedicated to the

eventual implementation of Islamic law in Somalia. Chief among these organizations was al-Jama`a al-Islamiyya.

It is common among militant Salafi groups for the leadership to have studied at Salafi institutions in Saudi Arabia while rejecting the legitimacy of the Saudi royal family. Somali Islamist groups have been no exception. Leaders such as Shaykh `Ali Warsame were training in Saudi Salafi institutions while working with social-activist minded Islamists akin to the Muslim Brotherhood movement. His group, Wahdat al-Shabab al-Islamiyya (Unity of Islamic Youth), partnered with al-Jama`a al-Islamiyya and, at the same time between 1982-84, the leadership of these two organizations merged and renamed itself al-Ittihad al-Islami. Warsame became a key leader in the new organization, and the leadership from the parent organizations largely remained unique.

### The Global Jihadi Presence in Somalia

The early 1990s brought further chaos and violence to the country, especially northern Somalia and Mogadishu, with the fall of the Siad Barre regime. Al-Ittihad had been openly denouncing the Barre regime, and amid the onset of civil war and growing lawlessness, the organization was transformed from one spreading the message of Salafi Islam to one engaged in armed conflict. Another key development that occurred during this time was the emergence of Dahir Hasan Aweys as the leader of the military wing of al-Ittihad, waging battles against rival clans and warlords fighting for control of the country. He was one of the group's leaders to establish ties with other militant Islamist groups, including al-Qa`ida members based in Sudan. Al-Ittihad enlisted thousands of fighters during the early 1990s.

Following a conference in 1991 (during which time al-Ittihad was attempting to exercise control in the power vacuum of Somali politics), `Ali Warsame was serving as a head of the group with Aweys as the leader of the military wing. From this point forward, al-Ittihad began receiving substantial funding from wealthy Saudi individuals and ostensibly charitable organizations like the Muslim World League and the International Islamic Relief Organization—two organizations known to be financial supporters of al-Qa`ida.

Al-Ittihad militants attacked foreign aid workers in Somalia and continued to launch attacks against rival factions. They took over and maintained control of some areas of Somalia and implemented strict versions of Islamic law there. Members of the group traveled freely throughout the Horn and established an extensive network in Kenya.

While al-Ittihad was attempting to establish an Islamic state in Somalia, al-Qa`ida was sending funding, arms and fighters to support the Islamists, and shared the same goal—the creation of an Islamic state in Somalia—although their support was not solely directed toward the al-Ittihad organization. Bin Laden acknowledged in two interviews that he supplied arms and training to the mujahidin who killed 18 American soldiers during Operation Restore Hope in October, 1993. Reports published by CNN and others

indicate that bin Laden provided these materials to the fighters under the warlord Muhammad Farah Aideed, who had affiliated himself with al-Ittihad. (Aideed plotted the coup against Siad Barre, and also switched his loyalties among various Islamist and tribal groups in Somalia during the early 1990s.) Such links were typical of al-Qa'ida's involvement in Somalia, given the fluidity of leadership and organizational structure among the militant groups.

Beginning in 1992, Muhammad Atef (aka Abu Hafs al-Masri) made multiple trips to Somalia from al-Qa'ida's base in Khartoum and met with militant leaders, accessed capabilities and made connections to provide training and arms to fighters there. The aim of these visits, according to the indictment against him by the U.S. Department of Justice, was to support local forces in attacking U.S. and UN forces in Somalia. It also coincided with a fatwa from bin Laden in 1993 calling for attacks on Western interests in Somalia. This culminated in the deaths of 18 U.S. military personnel on October 3-4, 1993, when three helicopters were downed by al-Qa'ida trained Somali militants.

Some analysts believe bin Laden devoted up to \$3 million towards the establishment of an Islamic state administered by al-Ittihad al-Islami. The purpose of this investment can be understood in terms of bin Laden's and his senior aides' desire to find alternate bases for their operations. Despite denials from bin Laden and Somali militants at various times of al-Qa'ida involvement in these battles, it is hard to deny the group's participation at some level in Somali militancy during this time, or the fact that bin Laden and others eyed Somalia as a potential safe haven for their organization.

In the following years, al-Ittihad was greatly weakened and began dissolving. One of the group's long-term aims was to reclaim Ogaden, the Somali-inhabited land in eastern Ethiopia, yet the group seems to have underestimated the resolve of the Ethiopian military, which determined to eradicate al-Ittihad in 1996. Although some members participated in the Islamic Courts Union that came to power a decade later, this was more a matter of leadership regrouping than a continuation of the al-Ittihad organization. According to one analyst:

“Al-Ittihad al-Islami is now largely defunct. It never recovered completely from Ethiopia's cross-border rout of the organization in 1996. While some members of AIAI joined the Islamic courts, most notably Aweys, the courts movement was distinct from AIAI and should not be considered a reincarnated version of it.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite questions about the level of al-Qa'ida's involvement in Somalia since the early 1990s, the statements by the group's senior leaders and strategists make clear the importance placed on Somalia for the global jihad movement. Additionally, during the late 1990s, mid-level operatives such as Harun Fazul and Wadih al-Hage were active in the Horn of Africa, in Nairobi and Mogadishu, while plotting the U.S. Embassy

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<sup>1</sup> Marquardt, "Al-Qaeda's Threat to Ethiopia."

bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Indeed, the lack of attacks on Western interests in Somalia is probably due to the fact that very few of them exist there, and the impact of actions are felt far greater on targets in other countries.

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## II. The Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EJIM)

Eritrean separatism began in earnest during World War II, as Eritrea passed from Italian to British rule in 1941 and remained under British administration until 1950. The initial constitution in 1952 was ratified by Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, but Eritrea and Ethiopia were linked through a federal system, under the sovereignty of the emperor. Eritreans resisted Ethiopian rule and began armed struggle for their independence in 1958.

The Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM) began activity in 1975 when a group of Islamist-minded guerrillas split off from the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) that had been fighting since the beginning of the Eritrean independence movement. The EIJM was formally established in 1980. Since independence in 1993, the EIJM (and its factions) have been the principal Muslim opposition group in Eritrea, seeking the violent overthrow of the ELF government led by President Isaias Afewerki. EIJM claims to only target the Eritrean government and its apparatus in the country, not Western targets, and seeks the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Eritrea.

The group is based in Sudan and is made up primarily of dissidents from the ELF, conservative Eritreans (and some other Muslims from Horn of Africa countries), and a Muslim youth network. The group is also known by a variety of other names—the Eritrean Islamic Reform Movement, the Abu Suhail organization, the Eritrean Islamic Salvation Movement, and the Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development—but many of these appear to be break-away groups that operate with some degree of autonomy.

This is reflective of the climate for political and militant Islamic organizations in the Horn of Africa. Like other neighboring countries during the last three decades, Eritrea saw a number of Salafi organization rise to popularity, where before the mid-1950s the ideology had been largely alien to this region. In the 1980s, the Jabhat Tahrir al-Iritriyya al-Islamiyya al-Wataniyya (The National Eritrean Islamic Liberation Front), the Munzzamat al-Ruwwad al-Muslimin al-Iritria (The Organization of Eritrean Pioneer Muslims), al-Intifada al-Islamiyya (Islamic Awakening) and others were founded, some in Sudan. By 1988, these organizations merged to form the EIJM.

This union of militant Islamists, however, continued to fragment. Within five years, a militant Salafi faction emerged under Shaykh Abu Suhail (also known as Muhammad Ahmad), who participated in the Afghan jihad against the Soviets. He is mentioned as the leader of the Eritrean Jihad movement in documents captured from al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan<sup>2</sup>. It is from this connection that some allege EIJM has ties to al-Qa'ida; its operations in Khartoum may also have put members in contact with al-Qa'ida,

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<sup>2</sup> See "Harmony and Disharmony: Exploiting Al-Qa'ida's Organizational Vulnerabilities", Harmony, AFGP-2002-801138.

which was also based in Sudan during the early- to mid-1990s. A more moderate faction calling for dialogue and reconciliation also emerged within the EIJM opposed to Abu Suhail.

Currently led by Khalil Mohammed Amer, the EIJM today falls under the umbrella of opposition group known as the Eritrean National Alliance. This can be a near dizzying array of organizations and factions in the Eritrean Islamic scene, but over the past decade, they have carried out relatively few successful operations. In 2003 EIJM claimed responsibility for a hotel bombing and an ambush killing 46 Eritrean military personnel. The group was initially blamed for the 2003 killing of British geologist Timothy Nutt, but EIJM denied the claims and reaffirmed its goals only to target the Eritrean government. In March 2006, a reincarnation of the EIJM, renamed the Harakat al-Islah al-Islamiyya al-Iritri, issued a statement claiming responsibility for five attacks over a one month period on Eritrean forces which resulted in the death of five soldiers.

With its base in Khartoum, the EIJM runs most of its operations in western Eritrea near the Sudanese border. Ethiopia temporarily allied with Sudan in the 1988 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Kalashnikovs and RPGs originating in Sudan have been found on EIJM rebels. Sudanese support has not been unconditional or long-term, however. While Hasan al-Turabi ruled most of Sudan in the early 1990s, he cracked down on some of the EIJM members and closed some of its offices and operations. Sudan hosts tens of thousands of Eritrean refugees, and as with other refugee diasporas, there was likely fear that they could influence Sudanese politics.

The main EIJM body led by Khalil Muhammad Amer, as described by its deputy Abu al-Bara' Hasan Salman in a 1998 interview with the now-defunct Islamist magazine *al-Nida'*, aims to carry out: "Armed struggle and training youth; da`wa [outreach] and education... [W]e accompany the Qur'an and Sunnah and aim to fulfill as a group all the aims therein and to realize our position as servants of Allah, and to establish the Islamic State." He states, "The Islamic Jihad Movement is striving against two groups, the Christian regime and the hypocrites. The movement also represents the only military option which had proved its fortitude in confronting the Christian regime in Eritrea."

Salman went on to say, regarding the "external front," which is "very sensitive ... from the aspect of our strategic security," that they aim to "exchange our experience and expertise with other Muslim organizations which also work to challenge the various corrupt regimes in the region... Strive to generate the suitable opportunities to support our Jihad through Islamic means; and [m]ove around neighbouring countries and expose the corruption of the Eritrean regime and its danger over the entire region on the religious, security, and political fronts."

As is clear from this description, the group has aspirations for uniting with like-minded Islamist groups (the majority of them militant Salafi) and moving toward the establishment of an Islamic state. There is thus a legitimate concern that the EIJM would seek to cooperation with al-Qa'ida, though the former remains ostensibly dedicated to only attacking Eritrean targets.

The Eritrean jihad movements are highly active online, promoting their message, providing extensive news coverage of developments and information condemning the Eritrean regime in three languages. Websites connected to or maintained by Eritrean Islamic Jihad include: (the now defunct) [www.eijm.org](http://www.eijm.org), [www.alkhalas.org](http://www.alkhalas.org) (the Eritrean Islamic Salvation Movement, renamed the Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development), [www.islaher.org](http://www.islaher.org) (the Eritrean Islamic Reform Movement), and the more moderate news portal [awate.com](http://awate.com).

Given the high degree of fragmentation, illustrated by the proliferation of factions and continual renaming of the organization, the movement remains ineffective, but not inactive. There is a shared set of ideology and goals between al-Qa'ida and the Eritrean Jihad movement, but given the absence of high-impact Western targets and the disharmony among Eritrean Islamist, it is unlikely al-Qa'ida or the wider global jihad movement would become seriously involved in Eritrea.

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