

Briefing Paper

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A CHALLENGING STATE

Emerging Armed Groups in Egypt

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Front cover photo

Screenshot from Hassm propaganda video picturing alleged Hassm gunmen. Source: Untitled video posted on social media by Hassm/Mokhtar Awad, 2016

Overview

A complex Islamist insurgency has raged in Egypt since July 2013, when the military overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood-led government. The coup effectively split the Muslim Brotherhood into two factions, one favouring political action and the other violence. New *'Ikhwani jihadi'* militant groups formed that are ideologically aligned with and connected to the Muslim Brotherhood. This Briefing Paper explores the origins of the Ikhwani-jihadi movement and its links to the Muslim Brotherhood. It follows the development of these groups, tracing their increased organization and capabilities through three distinct waves of violence. The paper notes that each wave is characterized by an increase in the sophistication and lethality of the groups and their attacks. Though they do not currently pose an existential threat to the Egyptian government, the Ikhwani-jihadi groups constituting the current third wave of violence—Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra—likely pose a more significant long-term danger than the well-known Salafi-jihadist groups operating in the Sinai.

Key findings

- A new strand of militant Islamism has evolved in Egypt since the July 2013 coup that ousted the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) from power. New Islamist militant groups ideologically aligned with and connected to the MB represent a type of MB jihadism (Ikhwani jihadism), in contrast to the predominant and more familiar Salafi jihadism.
- Since mid-2013 three waves of violence by armed groups adhering to this Ikhwani jihadism can be identified. Each wave is characterized by an increase in the lethality and capability of the groups constituting the wave. Two new violent groups, Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra, currently appear in the (ongoing) third wave.
- Violence associated with Ikhwani jihadism is a direct by-product of the July 2013 coup and its after-effects. The MB is now split, with at least two rival factions. One faction favours 'revolutionary work' and direct involvement in violence, while the other favours gradualism.
- Although Ikhwani jihadi violence does not pose an immediate existential threat to the Egyptian state or its incumbent government, it represents a potentially significant long-term security threat.

Introduction

An unprecedentedly complex Islamist insurgency has raged in Egypt since the overthrow of the MB government in a military coup in July 2013. In the north-east corner of the Sinai Peninsula the local Salafi jihadi group—Islamic State-Sinai Province (IS-SP), formerly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis—is waging a full-fledged insurgency using both terrorist and guerrilla tactics. In Egypt's Nile Valley—the country's heartland, where over 97 per cent of the population live (UNEP, 2013, p. 26)—various small Islamist armed groups have carried out terrorist attacks against the central government, with limited impact.

IS-SP is a Salafi jihadi group. Salafi jihadism is the doctrine followed by groups such as al-Qaeda and IS-SP's parent organization, the non-state armed group Islamic State. This doctrine calls for violence and the use of force to implement an extreme interpretation of puritanical Salafi Islam. The presence of Salafi jihadist armed groups in the Sinai is well-known and widely reported in the international press. But the groups in the Nile Valley represent another violent strand of Islamist armed action ideologically aligned with the MB (in Arabic, *'al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun'*). These groups follow a doctrine that can perhaps best be described as a type of MB jihadism, or Ikhwani jihadism.¹

This Briefing Paper analyses this new Ikhwani jihadi strand of Islamist armed groups by first describing this new doctrine. It then examines the MB and its 2013 fall from power in Egypt, followed by an overview of the contemporary evolution of these armed groups, specifically in the Nile Valley. The paper will then explore in detail the rise of two new groups—Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra—and analyse what is known or can be pieced together from public sources about their relationship to the MB. It concludes by examining the impact these groups' use of violence could potentially have on Egypt's stability and Islamism in Egypt.

The Briefing Paper is based on the author's own interviews; primary sources published by the armed actors examined, the Egyptian government, and the MB; and other open sources such as secondary research published on the subject matter and media reporting.

Ikhwani jihadism

Violent groups that fall into this distinct category adhere to the politico-religious doctrine and ideological tenets of the MB and similar Islamist groups. Although members of the MB and Salafi jihadis share some common ground, they differ on several matters of doctrine and tactics.² For instance, the Ikhwani jihadi theological strand is not as preoccupied with the issue of *takfir* (the act of declaring other Muslims apostates) as Salafi jihadis regularly are. Yet these Ikhwani jihadis still label the actions of both the government and their enemies as *kufr* (acts of apostasy).³ Furthermore, neither is this contemporary Ikhwani jihadi strand focused on the immediate implementation of Islamic law. Rather, it is more narrowly concerned with overthrowing the Egyptian regime,

and potentially other regimes in the region, as opposed to prioritizing global jihad. Thus, this emerging Ikhwani jihadism strain of thought is more comparable to the armed branch of Hamas—itsself a Palestinian group descended from the original Egyptian MB.

This new militant phenomenon has manifested itself in three waves since the ouster of former president Mohamed Morsi and his government in 2013:

- **Late 2013 to mid-2014:** In this first wave the armed groups were largely amateurish, with a focus on low-level acts of violence such as arson and sabotage, with a few instances of small bombs and assassinations.
- **Late 2014 to early 2016:** The second wave saw the rise of more coherent armed groups, such as the Popular

Resistance Movement and Revolutionary Punishment (discussed below). These groups were slightly better armed and more lethal, and with a refined ideology.

- **Mid-2016 to the present:** The third and ongoing wave represents the maturing of these groups into better-trained and -armed violent actors embodied by the Hassm (meaning ‘decisiveness’) movement and Liwaa al-Thawra (meaning ‘Revolution’s Brigade’). Hassm especially has carried out sophisticated assassinations and attacks using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) and regular attacks using anti-personnel improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In their public rhetoric, Islamist armed groups associated with this Ikhwani jihadi theological strand describe themselves as being ‘the resistance’ to the post-2013 Egyptian government.

This recent development in the Egyptian militant Islamist scene is a direct by-product of the MB’s failed experience in power, and of subsequent discord and fragmentation inside the organization itself. Although these new groups of armed actors are small, their adoption of violence represents a new challenge to Egypt’s domestic security and signals processes of militarization unfolding within Islamist groups such as the MB.

The Muslim Brotherhood’s rise and fall⁴

The MB is one of Egypt’s oldest and most organized Islamist groups and has been a key feature of Egyptian politics and society since its founding in 1928. The group’s founder, Hassan al-Banna, set out a vision for the eventual Islamization of Egypt and re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate through social and political activism—and at times, violence. For this reason, and others, the MB’s relationship with the central government has historically fluctuated between partnership, toleration, and outright hostility.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, the MB and its members periodically engaged in or plotted violence in addition to their political and social work. Before his assassination in 1949, al-Banna himself had set up a secret paramilitary wing to serve as the clandestine arm of the organi-

Box 1 Definitions of key terms

The following are working definitions of key terms and concepts described in this Briefing Paper. This list is offered to avoid conceptual confusion and clarify the intended usage.

Islamism–Islamists: ‘Islamists’ is a general term used to describe adherents of political Islam (‘Islamism’), which is the belief that Islam is both a religion and a system of government that should be implemented. The term ‘Islamists’ here is intended to encompass the MB, other miscellaneous advocates of political Islam, and political Salafis (as opposed to those Salafis eschewing political participation). Some Islamist allies of the MB are either independent or have founded their own political parties or organizations, which is also why this distinction is made.

Salafism–Salafis: ‘Salafism’ is a puritanical and ultra-orthodox form of Islam that teaches a highly literal interpretation of religious texts and theological discourses. Its followers are ‘Salafis’. Different schools of Salafism exist; however, the Salafis referenced in this paper are those who engage in politics or violence.

Salafi jihadism–Salafi jihadis: ‘Salafi jihadism’ is the term used to describe the ideology adhered to by those Salafis who advocate violence as their primary method to achieve change. ‘Salafi jihadis’ perceive the use of violence as necessary to achieve their shared goal of first destroying incumbent political regimes across the Muslim world in order to then bring about an Islamic state.

Non-Salafi jihadis or Ikhwani jihadis: Terms used interchangeably to differentiate various MB-inspired armed groups supporting violence from established Salafi jihadi armed groups or terrorist networks, such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State. Although they substantively differ from their Salafi jihadi counterparts with regard to theological doctrine, long-term objectives, and operational scope, Ikhwani jihadis also support the use of violence to achieve their goals.

Takfir: Arabic word for the act of declaring another Muslim an apostate, which may be a serious accusation in certain contexts where ‘apostasy’ could be punishable by death or imprisonment, or where the social consequences of such an accusation remain potentially high. Salafi jihadis unilaterally deem all incumbent rulers and government officials in Muslim countries as ‘apostates’. The violent wing of the MB does not formally or officially share this principle.

Nasheed: Arabic word for an Islamic chant that is either sung *a capella* or with percussion instruments. *Anasheed* (the plural) have a wide variety of uses for different Islamic sects; however, this paper specifically discusses *anasheed* as the war hymns of violent Islamists. The lyrics of a *nasheed* can thus help shed light on an Islamist militant group’s ideology. Also, Salafi jihadis exclusively produce *anasheed* that are *a capella* due to their strict prohibition on the use of musical instruments. If a *nasheed* contains instrumental music or excessive use of percussion, then it tends to indicate that the group using it is not Salafi jihadi.

zation. This so-called ‘Special Apparatus’ carried out several high-profile assassinations and bombings primarily targeting the MB’s political enemies and British occupation troops (Ashmawy, 2006). The MB organization was officially disbanded by the government in 1948, and after a brief 1953 revival was again dissolved in 1954 by President Gamal Abdel Nasser (Kandil, 2015, pp. 128–29). The paramilitary wing survived the crackdown, however, and new violent cells formed in the 1960s.

At the time of Nasser’s crackdown, Sayyid Qutb, the MB’s spiritual leader, introduced the radical idea that Islam was no longer being practised in its ‘true’ form, and that Egypt’s rulers were therefore ‘apostates’ for not implementing Islamic law on a national scale.⁶ The MB eventually distanced itself from the most extreme of Qutb’s ideas—*takfir*, or the act of declaring other Muslims apostates—and officially renounced violence in the 1970s. Qutb is still revered, however, and his writings are part of the group’s acculturation process (Kandil, 2015).⁷

As one of Egypt’s oldest and best-organized movements, the MB was uniquely well-positioned and well-equipped to act in the sudden political opening created by the January 2011 uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak. After the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) removed President Mubarak from office on 11 February, it tried to quickly return the country to what it perceived as ‘normalcy’ or ‘stability’ (Kirkpatrick, 2011). A fraught yet symbiotic relationship emerged between the SCAF and the MB at that time (Martini and Taylor, 2011). The MB positioned itself as the political force most capable of stabilizing the ‘street’ and guaranteeing the interests of the country’s powerful security establishment. The MB’s early advantage over other, less-organized social groups and political forces encouraged it to seek a quick political transition in the months following the 2011 uprising—a position aligned with the SCAF’s. In tacit alliance with the SCAF—and to the disadvantage of a diverse array of rival opposition groups—the MB and its Islamist allies managed to gain control of the new parliament by early 2012 (Kirkpatrick, 2012a).

Egypt was far from politically stable, however, because the various post-revolutionary political forces held different and contradictory visions of the country’s

future. Due to its complex history, many were suspicious of the MB and of the extent of its genuine commitment to democratic values (Blomfield, 2012). That nearly a quarter of the new parliament comprised ultra-orthodox Salafis did not help alleviate suspicions, because many across Egyptian society perceived these Salafis as MB proxies. Egypt’s non-Islamists feared that the country’s constitution would be changed (to allow for the implementation of Islamic punishments, for example) and that Islamists in the new parliament would irrevocably change Egypt’s system of government and national identity.

Presidential elections were held in the first half of 2012, which were ultimately won by the MB candidate, Mohamed Morsi, on 24 June (Kirkpatrick, 2012b). His electoral win was made possible by the MB’s significant organizational resources and campaigning skills. It was also facilitated (at least in part) by non-Islamist anti-regime protest voters refusing to support Ahmad Shafiq (Morsi’s opponent in the second round of voting) for various reasons, including his former position as Mubarak’s last prime minister. Yet Morsi’s early popular support seemed to quickly evaporate, as the MB’s way of governing became increasingly unpopular. After Morsi granted himself near-absolute executive powers by presidential decree in November 2012 (Kirkpatrick, 2012c), the increasing polarization in Egypt intensified as opposing sides closed ranks. Non-Islamists of various stripes—including some inside state institutions—strongly opposed the MB government through the first half of 2013. With the failure of various reconciliation efforts to defuse the situation, government opponents organized mass protests in June 2013, with many calling for early presidential elections.

This intensifying socio-political polarization introduced a new dynamic to the frequent street protests that had rocked Egypt since 2011, which had generally been directed at state-associated actors. By late 2012 civilians from rival political camps were now regularly clashing with one another and not just with security forces. These clashes went beyond street brawls, however: opposing political protesters and hired ‘thugs’ began to use melee weapons (weapons other than firearms used in street fighting) and even readily available, locally manufactured shotguns and birdshot ammunition

during their street clashes (Revkin, 2013; Giglio, 2013).

For its part, the MB had built a pro-government ‘alliance’ primarily comprising radical Salafis and other Islamists, including the former terrorist organization al-Gama’a al-Islamiyya (Loveluck, 2013).⁸ This alliance was alarming to many Egyptians for a number of reasons. For example, some Egyptians were concerned by the Morsi government’s perceived lax attitude towards Egyptians leaving to fight in the Syrian conflict, as well as towards the recruiting and financing networks supporting this mobilization (Batrawy, 2013). The pro-government alliance adopted increasingly divisive rhetoric. For example, Salafi-run television networks insinuated that political opponents of the Islamist-led government were not ‘real’ Muslims. The rhetoric and behaviour of Salafi political parties within Morsi’s ruling coalition, combined with the MB’s own increasing hardline approach to governing, made it appear to many of the government’s domestic rivals that the country was on the verge of a hostile Islamist takeover.

In late June 2013 the MB and its Islamist allies set up two major protest camps to pre-empt possible action against the Morsi government that might have arisen from planned opposition protests. In the eastern Cairo district of Nasr City they set up the Rabaa camp, while on the other side of the Greater Cairo area, in Giza, the Nahda camp was erected. The MB’s suspicions were confirmed when on 3 July 2013 Morsi’s hand-picked minister of defence, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, deposed him and then appointed a new temporary president, in what amounted to a popularly-backed coup (Sigelbaum, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2013).

Both Islamist protest camps were a magnet for radical Islamists where sectarian and uncompromising fiery rhetoric was the norm (McTighe, 2015). After the coup, MB leaders inside the camps agreed to adopt a ‘revolutionary’ strategy that would seek to reverse the coup and brace their supporters for anticipated confrontations. Bloody clashes followed in July and August 2013, and eventually the new Egyptian government violently cleared both camps on 14 August 2013. Nearly 1,000 MB supporters were estimated to have been killed on that day (HRW, 2014). Four months later the government officially outlawed the MB and declared it a terrorist organization (BBC, 2013).

The Muslim Brotherhood's fragmentation

Following the July 2013 coup and the bloody dispersal of MB protest camps that August, disagreements emerged within the MB over whether Morsi and senior MB leaders should have adopted a 'revolutionary' approach to 'cleanse' government institutions of anti-MB officials and bureaucrats while they were in power, as opposed to the MB's traditional gradualism.⁹ Some even argued that, had MB leaders adopted a 'tougher stance', the coup and its aftermath might have been avoided (Lang, Awad, and Katulis, 2013, pp. 12–18).

The MB had been in effect an Islamist organization with a radical but poorly defined project to transform Egypt into an Islamic state, yet it had adopted a gradualist approach that many of its members found to be ineffective and irreconcilable with the group's stated vision (Awad, 2017c). Although leaders and some well-off members had begun to articulate the MB's opening to democracy over the previous decades, modern liberal-democratic values were never integrated into the group's acculturation curriculum (Awad, 2017c; 2017d).

These confrontations set the stage for a seismic fragmentation following the MB's overthrow and the bloody crackdown against it. In turn, the crackdown facilitated the rise of a new MB faction calling for an explicitly 'revolutionary' approach, abandoning the organization's traditional gradualism. For some inside the organization and among its Islamist allies, this meant endorsing or carrying out violent action of varying

degrees, ranging from non-lethal arson and sabotage to assassinations.

Following the bloody dispersal of the protest camps of August 2013, an increase in violence occurred, as many Islamists and their supporters committed numerous acts of violence around the country. In one example, pro-MB Islamist mobs in Upper Egypt burned down dozens of Christian churches (Powers, 2013). Pro-MB Islamists also temporarily seized the town of Delga, Minya, for a few months (Kingsley, 2013). In Greater Cairo, the Islamist stronghold of Kerdasa, Giza, became a flashpoint. Islamists in the town and their supporters ransacked a local police station and killed the officers and police conscripts inside. Authorities only re-established control after heavy gun battles (AP, 2013). Salafi jihadi militants in the Sinai also seized the opportunity presented by this political chaos and killed dozens of soldiers in the months following the July 2013 coup, beginning a bloody insurgency that continues to this day (Awad and Hashem, 2015).

In these simultaneous acts of violence, many of which were spontaneous, Egypt caught a brief glimpse of what a showdown between Islamists and the government might look like. Islamist strongholds could potentially turn into pockets of armed violence and terrorism against the state and minorities. In turn, these strongholds could face the full weight of the state's security apparatus. Islamists failed to scale up and leverage the violence of late 2013, however. This was perhaps due to the loss of organized leadership, and the subsequent MB fragmentation and internal divisions brought about by the arrest of thousands

of Islamists in the aftermath of the Rabaa camp massacre. This organizational chaos resulted in ineffective, low-intensity violence rather than a sustained assault on the state.

Some MB leaders—especially among the older generation (dubbed the 'Old Guard')—feared the trajectory of armed insurgency, believing that they could not win such a fight against the security forces (Awad, 2017d). What remained of the MB's leadership urged protests and either quietly approved low-level acts of violence (for example, burning police cars and other acts of sabotage) or treated such incidents as an inevitable reaction by the MB's core supporters (Awad, 2017d).

At some point in late 2013 and early 2014, senior MB leader Mohamed Kamal and others—including many younger generation leaders and supporters—allegedly set up 'special operations committees' tasked with executing small-scale attacks as part of a 'disorientation and attrition' strategy directed against the Egyptian government.¹⁰ Kamal had been selected to head the MB's temporary executive committee, known as the High Administrative Committee, and he essentially held the MB's reins of power inside Egypt in this period (Awad, 2017d). Although most MB leaders seemed to have been initially in agreement over the endorsement of low-level non-lethal violence, this internal consensus began to weaken as violent operations allegedly linked to the new committees escalated (Awad, 2017d).

This divergence over strategy would set the stage for a later schism inside the MB between two factions representing different constituencies within the group. Later internal MB divisions in 2015–16

Table 1 Selected causal chains from armed conflict to indirect conflict deaths

'Wave' Time period	Group characteristics	Commonly used weapons	Estimated intensity of violence	Associated armed groups
1st wave <i>Late 2013–mid-2014</i>	Little to no training; disorganized; no command and control; largely non-lethal	Molotov cocktails and occasionally handguns	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wala' ● Molotov ● Execution Movement ● 'The Unknowns'
2nd wave <i>Late 2014–early-2016</i>	More polished image with websites; refined discourse; lethal, but lacked specialized training	Light weapons and rudimentary IEDs	Medium to high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revolutionary Punishment ● Popular Resistance Movement
3rd wave <i>Mid-2016–present</i>	Good command and control systems; specialized training; focus on both ideological and political statements, and military communiqués	Assault rifles, IEDs, VBIEDs	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hassm ● Liwaa al-Thawra

resulted in strategic dissonance inside the organization as leaders vigorously debated the issue of violence (Awad, 2016b; Tadros, 2015). The group's Old Guard—represented by Acting Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat, London-based Deputy Supreme Guide Ibrahim Mounir, and Secretary-General Mahmoud Hussein—attempted to regain control of the MB. They ostensibly rejected the escalation in violence and so-called ‘revolutionary action’ allegedly championed by the rival ‘New Guard’ of Mohamed Kamal and his comrades. The Old Guard allegedly cut off funding to non-compliant New Guard-affiliated MB offices, which had an impact on the financing of violent operations (Awad, 2016b). Kamal was killed in an Egyptian police raid in late 2016 (Hamama, 2016).

Currently, the split between the two factions is a clear schism. The New Guard now claims leadership over the entire organization, with the executive office renamed the ‘General Office of the Muslim Brotherhood’ (MB, 2016b).

Emergence of violent Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups post-2013

Following the July 2013 coup and a series of bloody confrontations between Islamists and the new government, some of the MB and other allied Islamists looked to undertake violent action against the government. Those Islamists calling for violence justified their actions on religious and political grounds. In the process, they appropriated revolutionary

discourse in a bid to frame their partisan fight as a broader struggle to continue the 2011 popular revolution. Early confrontations with the government after the protest camp dispersals in August were in large part confined to university campuses where Islamist students were most active, specifically al-Azhar University, which would later prove to be a key recruitment ground for new Islamist militants.¹¹ Frequent street clashes also occurred and, as events grew more violent through the autumn of 2013, more MB members and affiliates began to justify carrying firearms and melee weapons on the pretext of self-defence.

Many of these MB adherents had already been part of the so-called ‘deterrence committees’, which are the latest iteration of the temporary MB-organized committees that have historically appeared during times of crises to act as a sort of unarmed guard.¹² According to a former MB member who interacted with these committees firsthand, more physically fit MB members were often recruited for this work and units made up of these recruits were in place to defend the Rabaa camp.¹³ The MB had internally justified reliance on such ad hoc committees in the past by attesting that these groups did not carry firearms, and that they were necessary in light of the organization’s historical tendency to get into physical scuffles with either the police or members of other political factions. By late 2013, however, the overall situation had deteriorated to such an extent that incidents of armed violence began to increase.

The first known organized violent Islamist groups in the late 2013–early 2014 period generally stuck to using Molotov

cocktails. Occasionally they used hand-guns—sometimes of local manufacture—to attack police officers and so-called thugs allegedly working with authorities (Awad and Hashem, 2015, pp. 9–14; Tadros, 2015). The groups’ names were telling: one went by ‘Molotov’; another opted for Wala’, or ‘Set Fire’; and a third simply called itself the ‘Execution Movement’. The majority of the groups, however, did not have names and were collectively referred to as ‘The Unknowns’. These groups engaged in acts of violence ranging from arson to occasionally shooting at police or their alleged civilian collaborators. Their actions caused injuries and sometimes even deaths. State authorities alleged that all this activity was commissioned by the MB’s special operations committees (SIS, n.d.). Although attacks in this period taxed the security forces, the low intensity of the violence made it seem as though it could be temporary—that angry Islamist youth were simply venting their frustrations after Morsi’s removal from power. Yet the message of these groups was uncompromising and signalled their determination to seek revenge, seemingly driven by the religiously-inspired ideological conviction of a ‘sacred struggle’. There were also reports of a faction within the MB that was actively inciting, organizing, and funding these violent efforts (Awad and Hashem, 2015, pp. 9–16; Hamama, 2017b).

After a relatively quiet summer, more pro-violence Islamist groups emerged between autumn 2014 and spring 2015.¹⁴ These groups urged ‘popular resistance’ and openly embraced the use of firearms. This call to violent action was echoed by MB-affiliated or -sympathetic media



Propaganda photos posted on social media by Liwaa al-Thawra, featuring weapons and ammunition. Source: Twitter/Mokhtar Awad, 2016

channels, websites, and social-media accounts, which urged escalation and incitement on religious and ideological grounds (Awad and Brown, 2015). The calls turned to messages of support for the second wave of armed groups as they emerged. One example was when a guest on the MB-run Masr al-An channel (later renamed Watan) called on one of these armed groups to turn its guns on pro-regime media figures (Masr al-An, 2015).¹⁵ The increase in violent activity overall ensured that conditions on the ground remained ripe for the rise of Islamist militancy in its Salafi jihadi and Ikhwani forms.

The second wave of violent attacks linked to elements inside the factionalized and divided MB began in late 2014 and early 2015. In August 2014, coinciding with the first anniversary of the state's violent dispersal of Islamist protest camps, a group calling itself the Popular Resistance Movement (PRM) announced itself (PRM-Egypt, 2014). The PRM mainly carried out small, less-sophisticated IED attacks. In January 2015 a new and more sophisticated group appeared under the name Revolutionary Punishment (RP). The timing of RP's formation coincided with what MB leader Magdy Shalash, one of Mohamed Kamal's lieutenants, said was the strategy of anti-regime escalation of Kamal's pro-violence faction (Mekamleen TV, 2016). Islamist sources also identified RP as being connected to the MB (Youssef, 2016). Investigative reporting by the Egyptian independent news outlet Mada Masr further claimed that at the time of Kamal's leadership the MB specifically founded both RP and the PRM (Hamama, 2017b).

In about a year of activity RP carried out at least 157 attacks across 18 governorates. Almost half (43 per cent) took place in the MB stronghold of Fayyoun, located in Central Egypt (RP, 2016). Although RP failed to make a significant strategic impact, its reach and persistence were nonetheless impressive. The group relied mainly on light weapons and rudimentary IEDs to target security forces. According to numbers published by the group, about 50 per cent of its operations were explosions, at least 45 per cent were armed attacks (usually ambushes of police officers in remote areas), and the remainder were assassinations (Awad and Hashem, 2015, pp. 13–14; Awad, n.d.). The group used light arms in over 51 attacks, primarily Kalashnikov-pattern rifles. It also claimed to have used hand grenades on at least

two occasions. RP claimed to have killed at least 157 security force members, although this number could not be independently verified (RP, 2015b).

One of RP's most sophisticated operations took place in August 2015, when it targeted a bus carrying policemen with an IED (RP, 2015d). The attack killed two and injured dozens more. RP released a video taking credit for the attack that featured its original *nasheed*, or Islamic chant, entitled 'When the Punishment Comes' (RP, 2015d). The recording of an original *nasheed* further signalled how the group was more sophisticated and had more resources than similar groups that preceded it.¹⁶

In common with many contemporary jihadi groups, RP has used videos such as the one described above to announce itself and its actions to the world. Perhaps the most telling and disturbing of its videos came in June 2015, a few months before the August 2015 bus attack video. This video showed the execution of a civilian whom RP had accused of being an informant (RP, 2015c). The video was clearly inspired by contemporary Salafi jihadi groups' video production styles. It also had verses from the Quran justifying 'retribution' and contained old jihadi *anasheed* from the early 2000s. The use of older jihadi *anasheed* signals the group's Islamist character, yet intentionally distances itself from appearing to be influenced by contemporary Salafi jihadi groups, such as Islamic State, which has its own hallmark *anasheed*.

RP videos also frequently included images of Islamists being beaten by authorities and invoked a religious discourse common to the MB and allied Islamists. The most significant hallmark of this form of discourse is abstention from *takfir*, or the act of labelling individual opponents as apostates, while still describing their actions as a form of apostasy. This is a key distinction between Salafi jihadi and non-Salafi jihadi Islamists: the MB and Islamists groups that are ideologically or operationally aligned with it do not formally practise *takfir*.

RP never published eulogies for killed leaders or members, or any other identifying information. For this reason, not much is known about its hierarchy and membership. The specific source of its weapons is also unknown, although some of its arsenal allegedly included standard-issue firearms seized after attacks on Egyptian security forces.

Egyptian authorities have alleged that they captured MB members who belonged to RP (MENA, 2015).

By the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016 RP's activity—and violent activity overall on the Egyptian mainland—was beginning to wind down, as divisions inside the MB escalated and the security forces gained the upper hand. One of the last attacks RP claimed was in January 2016, after an IED factory in Giza exploded. Oddly, IS-SP, which had cells operating in Giza and the greater Cairo area, also claimed the same attack. It remains unclear what the implications of these double claims are, because they have been extremely rare in Egypt (Asher-Schapiro, 2016). It may point to the possibility of some crossover between members of the two groups when they were operating in the same area.

Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra

The summer of 2016 witnessed the rise of two new and far more sophisticated armed groups in the Egyptian mainland: Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra. Hassm ('decisiveness') is the Arabic acronym for its full name, Harakat Sawa'id Misr (Movement of Egypt's Arms). Liwaa al-Thawra translates as 'The Revolution's Brigade' (Awad, 2016c). Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra together constitute the third wave of Ikhwani jihadi groups noted above. Importantly, they appear to be the likely offshoots of the MB's special operations committees and RP, and so represent the flowering of Ikhwani jihadi armed groups (Awad, 2016c; Hamama, 2016).

Hassm

Hassm's first known operation was an armed ambush on 16 July 2016 targeting a local chief of investigations in Fayyoun governorate (Hassm, 2016a). The modus operandi of the attack was similar to that of RP and took place in RP's traditional home territory of Fayyoun. This first attack raised the spectre that Hassm might be a continuation of RP on the mainland, operating under a new name and with new leadership.

The group's second attack catapulted it to national prominence when it attempted to assassinate the former mufti, Ali Gomaa, in August 2016. The attack took place in Giza, west of the Cairo metropolitan area

(Hassm, 2016b). Although Gomaa is generally disliked by anti-government Islamists, he is widely popular in Egypt and his death would likely have sent shockwaves through Egyptian society. Perhaps more importantly, had Gomaa died, the support given to President Sisi by Islamic clergy could have been significantly disturbed. Targeting Gomaa signalled an escalation in the terrorist strategy of Hassm and associated armed groups, implying that any civilian public figure supportive of the Egyptian regime was a potential target. It is interesting to note that RP had also targeted Gomaa a year earlier by planting explosives that damaged one of his homes (RP, 2015a; Abu el-Ela, 2015).

Hassm carried out two other successful assassinations of low-ranking police officers, one in Giza (September 2016) and the other in Beheira (October 2016). The latter victim worked for State Security (al-Amn al-Watany), Egypt's domestic intelligence agency (Hassm, 2016d; 2016f). Hassm also attacked and killed a civilian in Damietta in March 2017, alleging that the victim was a hired 'thug' working with state security institutions (Hassm, 2017b). Hassm planted IEDs to target an officers' club in Damietta (September 2016) and a security motorcade in Qalyubiyya (March 2017) (Hassm, 2016c; 2017c). Its most sophisticated attack to date was the attempted assassination of Egypt's assistant general prosecutor using a VBIED in the east Cairo district of the Fifth Settlement in September 2016 (Hassm, 2016e). Another failed VBIED attack in November 2016, also in east Cairo, targeted a prominent judge overseeing MB-related legal cases, including that of former president Mohamed Morsi (Hassm, 2016g; Abdul Hamid, 2016).

Hassm's most recent attacks have become increasingly bold. In May 2017 a unit called 'Hassm's Hawks' (which Hassm describes as its own 'special forces' unit) attacked a police checkpoint. The attack killed at least three policemen and Hassm stole their weapons (Hassm, 2017d). In June 2017 the group planted an IED in south Cairo targeting a police vehicle, killing one police officer and injuring four others (Hassm, 2017e). In July 2017 the group assassinated a senior State Security officer in Qalyubiyya governorate and ambushed a police convoy in Fayyom (Hassm, 2017f; 2017g).

The geographic distribution of the attacks seems likely to be intentional.

Rather than a localized insurgency, Hassm seems to be trying to establish itself as a serious threat with national reach—perhaps in an attempt to give the impression that it may one day overwhelm the security services through the simultaneous operations of multiple armed cells in different locales.

Liwaa al-Thawra

In contrast, Liwaa al-Thawra has been far less active. This group's first operation was an armed assault on a sleepy police checkpoint in Menoufia in late August 2016 (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2016a). Images published by the group (and later a video) showed what appeared to be two well-trained armed men jumping out of a car and easily taking over the checkpoint.

The group's discourse is similar to that of Hassm in that it represents itself as 'revolutionary' and is clearly Islamist in orientation, although (like Hassm) it does not engage in *takfir* of individuals. Liwaa al-Thawra's logo shows a fighter holding a green flag with the Arabic inscription 'Allahu Akbar' ('God is Greatest').

The group's first video was entitled 'The Revenge of the Freeman' and was released in September 2016 (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2016b). The video began with a Quranic recitation: 'Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory' (Quran 22:39). This verse was followed by images of the forced clearing of the Rabaa camp and other actions characterized as police abusing various Islamist protesters. In the video a masked man warns the 'traitors' and the 'mad butcher' (a reference to President Sisi) of retribution and tells the 'mercenaries' of the police that they too will be targeted as long as they support Sisi.

Liwaa al-Thawra's tactics and targeting are also similar to those of Hassm. The group has used IEDs in its attacks, targeting a police training facility in the Delta governorate of Gharbiyya in April 2017 (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2017b). Its most significant attack came in October 2016 when the group assassinated Brigadier General Adel Raga'i in front of his Cairo home (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2016b).



Collage of photo reports of attacks issued by Hassm (left) and Liwaa al-Thawra (right). Source: Max-Security.com, 2017

In the aftermath of this assassination, Liwaa al-Thawra posted screenshots of other death threats it had sent (via WhatsApp) to pro-regime figures, including former justice minister Ahmad El Zind, prominent Coptic lawyer Naguib Gobrail, businessman Ahmad Abu Hashima, and prominent journalist Khaled Salah. The authenticity of the threats was verified by the recipients and investigated by Egyptian authorities. This is significant because the threats signal the group's intention to target pro-regime civilian public figures, just as Hassm does. Perhaps the most ominous of the threats was the one directed at Gobrail, a lawyer known mainly for representing Christian issues and taking anti-Islamist positions. He is the first Coptic Christian to be singled out during this third wave of violence, signalling that Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra are also willing to engage in sectarian-based targeting.

Weapons and tactics

The weapons used by both Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra do not appear to differ much from those used by RP before them. The notable exception is the increased effectiveness of IEDs used in attacks by

the two groups when compared with those used by RP and the PRM. An analysis of some of the weapons featured in Hassm's publications indicates that they possibly use Kalashnikov-pattern rifles that are likely of Albanian or Chinese origin, including Chinese Type 56 rifles.¹⁷ Other weapons used by both groups (and RP before them) include standard-issue Egyptian rifles probably looted from government forces after successful attacks.

Both Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra are focused on targeted assassinations and exhibit a level of training and capability not seen in the Nile Valley in decades among a non-Salafi jihadi group. The focus on assassination is likely a result of learning from the failures of previous groups. Earlier groups focused on high numbers of attacks rather than higher-value targets. These groups also used their very limited resources on acts of arson, basic and largely ineffective IEDs, and other acts of sabotage. Although the number of attacks was initially overwhelming for the police, the attacks themselves were never serious enough to significantly degrade government control in the target areas. In contrast, Hassm's and Liwaa al-Thawra's targeted assassination campaigns, which extend beyond low-ranking officers and specifically target civilian

public figures, is a strategy intended to challenge the Egyptian regime and test the public's confidence in the regime's grip on domestic security.

Map 2 shows the geographic distribution of Hassm's and Liwaa al-Thawra's attacks, 17 in total, compared to those of RP, which were 157 in total. Although Hassm's and Liwaa al-Thawra's frequency of attacks pales in comparison to RP's, the former two have gained much greater notoriety due to the targeted focus and sophistication of their attacks. Also, instead of focusing on Central Egypt, which includes Fayyoun and Beni Suef, Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra have instead focused more on Greater Cairo (Cairo, Giza, and Qalyubiyya), as well as the Delta. The proximity to the capital and population centres makes these groups' terrorist attacks more effective, because they are felt by the wider population.

Transnational and Muslim Brotherhood links

Transnational links are a key aspect necessary to understanding the contemporary evolution of militancy inside Egypt. Both Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra operatives are leveraging what appears to be specialized training they may have received to carry out their armed operations. The groups' increased capability is also likely due to practical know-how acquired by what state authorities allege are fighters returning to Egypt from foreign conflict zones. Egyptian authorities have warned recently that men who have travelled to Sudan, Syria, Libya, and Iraq may have been returning to Egypt undetected (Malsh, 2016). Foreign fighters also represent a potential source of increased operational effectiveness, as seen in the scenes of a desert training camp depicted in a video Hassm released in October 2016 (Hassm, 2017a).¹⁸

Egyptian authorities have alleged that training camps for Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra were located in Sudan, citing the large MB presence in the country and the suspected sympathies of parts of the Sudanese security services towards the MB's cause (El-Gergawy and Fouad, 2017). In a video released by Egyptian state security prosecutors, they claim that the training of Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra elements took place in and near the Sudanese city of Omdurman (Akhbar al-Youm, 2017). Although more



Source: OpenStreetMap

specific details are not known, there is reason to suspect that jihadi groups in Egypt, including Ikhwani jihadi groups, have transnational connections to Sudan. In February 2017, for example, Sudanese authorities arrested 13 Egyptians alleged to be MB members after a bomb accidentally exploded in an apartment that housed Syrian, Sudanese, and Egyptian men (Hamama, 2017a).

Although Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra do not explicitly associate themselves with the MB, their public rhetoric is nearly identical to that of the MB-linked RP before them, and to MB discourse overall. At a minimum, this indicates that Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra take inspiration from the MB. Their rhetoric specifically echoes the religious justifications for fighting the Egyptian government previously used by the MB and pro-MB scholars. For example, the groups do not refer to President Sisi as an ‘infidel’, a charge more likely to be made by Salafi jihadi groups. Rather, they refer to him and his security forces as ‘occupiers’, meaning that they were usurpers of power, or *ahl al-baghy*. This wording is specifically borrowed from a 2015 book written by the MB’s Islamic Law (Sharia) Committee entitled *The Jurisprudence of Popular Resistance to the Coup*. The book was commissioned by MB factional leader Mohamed Kamal’s executive committee (Assad, 2015). Other documents published by the MB and pro-MB scholars include ‘Egypt Call’ (MEMRI, 2015) and *Egypt Liberation Document* (Tahrir Misr, 2016). These specific documents, along with other similar ones, articulate a sharia-based justification for violence within the discursive parameters of the MB’s ideology (Awad, 2016a).

There are many other indications of affinity between Hassm, Liwaa al-Thawra, and MB-aligned or -affiliated groups. One of the more telling indications of this ideological affinity was Hassm’s choice of the *nasheed* entitled ‘A Mountain Called Hamas’ in its first video.¹⁹ This *nasheed* is one used by Hamas, the Palestinian MB offshoot. (Like RP before it, Hassm also uses old jihadi *anasheed* in its videos.) There are also some prominent MB supporters of Hassm: MB youth leader Ezzdin Dewedar, a supporter of the late MB factional leader Mohamed Kamal, regularly republishes Hassm statements on his personal Facebook page.²⁰ There are other examples on social media that may indicate affinity, even coordination. For instance, one of the props in the background of a Liwaa al-Thawra video,

a fighter’s black airsoft mask, is identical to the prop photographed and uploaded to a now defunct pro-violence Facebook page called ‘Resistance Media’ (Resistance Media, 2017). The page was created at around the same time that both Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra were founded and regularly republished their statements. Resistance Media also periodically published its own pro-resistance propaganda. A similar pro-MB page called ‘Qaaf’ also agitates for ‘resistance’. Qaaf recently

posted an ‘exclusive’ interview with the spokesperson for Liwaa al-Thawra, which answered questions Liwaa al-Thawra had previously requested from its supporters, indicating direct contact between the page’s administrators and the group and the explicit propaganda role these online pages play (Qaaf, 2017). Both pages’ contents are sometimes shared and spread by known Islamist and MB figures. Ashraf Abdelghaffar and other Egyptian MB leaders have shared Resistance Media



Source: OpenStreetMap



Screenshot from Liwaa al-Thawra propaganda video entitled 'Revenge of the Freeman'. Source: Liwaa al-Thawra, 2016a

content on their personal social media profiles.²¹

Perhaps the most explicit and significant indication of a connection between the MB and Liwaa al-Thawra is found in the latter's statement of responsibility for the assassination of Brigadier General Raga'i. In it, the group says that the operation was in part revenge for the security forces' killing of MB leader Mohamed Kamal (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2016c). In the group's follow-up video after claiming responsibility for the attack, it eulogized slain MB leaders by showing their pictures, including that of Kamal (Liwaa

al-Thawra, 2016d). Another video shows a training camp and the video 'testaments' of two dead Liwaa al-Thawra members who were both al-Azhar University students and believed to have been MB members. The *nasheed* in this video is RP's 'When the Punishment Comes' (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2017a).

As for Hassm, there are also indications of connections between the group and the MB. The one known leader of Hassm who was killed by the authorities, Mohamed Ashour Dashisha, was an Arabic teacher and graduate from the prestigious Dar al-Ulum college at Cairo University.

An examination of Dashisha's social media profiles indicates that he was at least a supporter of the MB and likely a member as well (Awad, 2017b). More importantly, in November 2016 the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior released a video statement claiming the arrest of several Hassm members. The arrested members' confessions alleged a direct operational link to the MB (Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, 2016). Interestingly, the MB admitted that the persons arrested by the government were MB members, but said that they were simply 'rights activists' (MB, 2016a). Notably, neither of

the two rival MB factions has yet released any statement explicitly condemning Hassm or Liwaa al-Thawra, or any of their attacks.

Understandable doubts remain among observers as to whether there is an organizational connection between the MB, Hassm, and Liwaa al-Thawra. Certainly, aside from evidence presented by the Egyptian government of such connections, there is little independent, verifiable, and open-source information that sheds light on potential operational connections. This will likely continue to be the case unless and until an MB leader explicitly admits to a connection on the record. Such a scenario seems unlikely, however, because the violence allegedly used by the MB and Ikhwanī jihādī groups serves a specific political purpose. Unlike Salafī jihādī groups, the MB does not see violence as its sole tactic, nor does it see benefit in claiming responsibility for attacks that would diminish its international standing. Without a leak or verified interception of official communications, open-source research cannot easily identify or provide definitive confirmation of any linkages between MB and Hassm or Liwaa al-Thawra, or penetrate a clandestine operation that would reveal such a connection.

Regardless of the degree of connection to the MB as an *organization*, there is little doubt that Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra have in their ranks and among their supporters either current or former members of the MB and allied Islamist groups. The political context in which they operate makes this all but a certainty (Awad, 2017b).

Conclusion

Thus far Hassm and Liwaa al-Thawra appear to have attracted few recruits. The limited response is likely due to constraining physical factors and not to a lack of popularity among the Islamist community, however. Regardless, the two groups have shown themselves to be capable of recruiting middle-class Islamist and MB youth, some of whom have not previously faced direct repression or torture by the state. This contrasts with commonly encountered assumptions about radicalization primarily being a prison phenomenon in Egypt currently and shows how widespread it has become.²² Such recruiting success also demonstrates

the government's need to identify and mitigate the drivers contributing to the growth of this new militant phenomenon in Egypt.

The question of these groups' degree of connection to the MB is also significant because the MB and its Islamist allies in Egypt represent a deep pool of possible recruits for this type of radicalization. Even if Ikhwanī jihādī groups do not utilize this pool of recruits, it remains a danger. For example, although Salafī jihādīs, such as IS-SP and al-Qaeda, present a much more sophisticated security risk in the sparsely populated Sinai Peninsula, they currently do not provide an existential threat to the government in Cairo. This may change, however, if they are able to establish their presence on the Egyptian mainland by tapping into this pool of recruits.

Likewise, the future security stability of Egypt hinges in part on the trajectory of these types of groups and whether there are elements inside the MB and broader Islamist community who support violence. In that case, independent of whatever 'push' factors may have primed youth to accept violent ideas, there may still be significant 'pull' factors in the form of discursive ideological appeals and rhetorical arguments, financing, and training provided by such pro-violence Islamists. Furthermore, the Egyptian MB's active operations following the 2013 exile of some leaders and members to Sudan, Turkey, Qatar, and various European countries mean that the capabilities once largely confined to Egypt are dispersed, and a sophisticated network of fundraising, movement of human assets, and alleged training in countries such as Sudan exists where it did not before, providing external support factors for this type of violent activity. The centrality of the Egyptian MB to the MB worldwide, as well as to similar Islamist groups, means that the rise of a 'pro-violence' discourse and violent offshoots may not necessarily be contained within Egypt's borders in the future. Finally, even if this new Ikhwanī jihādī militant strain does not ultimately prevail, its gradual spread could expose a wider pool of Islamists to violent action and potential recruitment by more established violent groups, such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State, whose ideologies do not represent much of a 'leap' for members who have been exposed to such rhetoric and thinking. ●

List of abbreviations

IED	Improvised explosive device
IS-SP	Islamic State-Sinai Province
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
PRM	Popular Resistance Movement
RP	Revolutionary Punishment
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
VBIED	Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device

Notes

- 1 *Ikhwan* is Arabic for 'brothers' or 'brotherhood'. '*Ikhwanī*' used here refers to the Muslim Brotherhood
- 2 This is not to say they are not largely similar; arguably, the leap from one doctrine to another is not great.
- 3 In Islamic jurisprudence the differentiation is that between declaring apostasy on the particular, which is the individual Muslim; or declaring apostasy on the genus, meaning the acts of apostasy themselves without declaring the individual Muslim committing them an apostate. This distinction is evident in an interview with a Liwaa al-Thawra spokesperson that was posted online; see Qaaf (2017). For a fuller discussion and background on the issue of declaring *takfir* on the particular versus the genus, see Tadros (2014).
- 4 For more information and discussion of the MB's history, see Mitchell (1969); Kandil (2015); and Trager (2016). This Briefing Paper has relied on these sources in its general discussion of the MB.
- 5 Also known as the 'Secret Apparatus'. See Mitchell (1969); Kandil (2015); and Trager (2016).
- 6 Qutb's ideas have since inspired generations of violent Islamists across the Islamism spectrum.
- 7 For further information, see Kandil (2015, ch. 1: 'Cultivating the Brother'; ch. 3: 'Forging the Ideology').
- 8 Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya had waged a low-level insurgency along with other militant groups in the 1980s–90s (Gerges, 2000).
- 9 This type of disagreement was prevalent among MB adherents at the time. Such dissent is surprisingly not rare in a group built on a strict hierarchy, whose members must undergo a multi-year process to prove their loyalty and obedience to their superiors (Trager, 2011). Because there was traditionally little room for serious debate over strategy, however, senior leaders were in many respects beyond criticism or reproach. Those who dissented had little choice but to leave or stay silent.
- 10 For more extensive research documenting the MB's turn to violence and the internal

dynamics discussed in this Briefing Paper, see Awad and Hashem (2015); Awad (2016a); Hashem (2016); Shams El-Din (2015); Hamama (2015); El Telawy (2016); and Youssef (2016).

- 11 See Awad and Hashem (2015, p. 9): ‘According to a rights group tracking student casualties, police across Egypt killed 191 students and arrested 1,671 from July 3, 2013 to April 25, 2014. Nearly 84 per cent of deaths were of students enrolled in campuses in greater Cairo, 39 percent of which were students in the religious al-Azhar University, the university with the most active protests during the 2013–2014 school year. The 2014–2015 school year started with a rash of violence, with students rioting against a private security firm hired by the government to police campuses. However, campus activism soon died down as the proliferation of new groups once more made the streets the epicenter of protest.’
- 12 For more background on the deterrence committees, see Arfa (2015); Tadros (2015); and Awad and Tadros (2017).
- 13 Author interview with former MB member, Istanbul, May 2016.
- 14 As this evolution of Ikwhani jihadi violent groups occurred, new Salafi jihadi groups were springing up in the mainland and the existing Salafi jihadi group IS-SP was intensifying its insurgency in the Sinai. These Salafi jihadi groups exploited Islamist grievances to justify their violence and win over recruits. Ajnad Misr, for instance, called its violent operations part of a ‘retribution’ campaign against the government and focused in detail on issues such as alleged female sexual abuse and the Islamists who died in the Rabaa camp (Ajnad Misr, 2014). In parallel, IS-SP sought to capitalize on its killing of hundreds of members of the Egyptian security forces to present itself as the standard bearer of the Egyptian jihad (Awad and Hashem, 2015, pp. 18–20). For more information, see Hauslohner (2013); and Kingsley (2014).
- 15 For more on MB media networks, see Awad (2017a).
- 16 The lyrics and music of a militant group’s *nasheed* may also shed light on its ideology and its influences. In the case of RP’s *nasheed*, its heavy use of percussion instruments is similar to the music used by non-Salafi groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah in their own *anasheed*.
- 17 Written correspondence with a weapons expert, April, 2017.
- 18 A Liwaa al-Thawra training camp video was also released in March 2017 (Liwaa al-Thawra, 2017a).
- 19 Examples of both the video and the song are available online.
- 20 For example, see Dewedar, n.d.
- 21 For example, see Abdelghaffar (2017).
- 22 For examples of such assumptions in recent discussions or reporting on radicalization in Egypt, see Fadel (2016a; 2016b); Diehl (2015); and Abrams (2015).

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