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The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa



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Abstract: This report explores whether the Muslim Brotherhood can act as partners in the quest for development and peacemaking in the wider Horn of Africa (including Yemen). It explores the history of the various Brotherhoods in the wider Horn and finds that the Brotherhood has had most impact in Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.
The report suggests that positive engagement, while taking the ideological foundation of the Brotherhood as well as the structure of various sub-groups into considerations, could benefit both the Brothers, the Western partners and the local population, and enhance development efforts.

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Preface

This study is the result of one year of field studies in the whole of the wider Horn of Africa region and Egypt. It would not have been possible without the help of several individuals: Samah H. A. Alghaffar conducted many of the interviews in Sudan, as did Abdulqadir Hussein Maalin in the Somali setting. Jonathan Benthall, Mohamed Salih, Nasser Arrabye, and Laurent Bonnefoy gave helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Marine Poirier, Arild Schou and Abdelwahab El Affendi for their helpful comments on the final manuscript as well as the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for funding this project.

Oslo, December 2009

Marit Haug
Research Director

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Summary

Stig Jarle Hansen and Atle Mesøy

The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa

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This report explores the Muslim Brotherhood in the Horn of Africa in order to see if they could function as partners in a quest to promote peace, stability and development. The report identifies three major Brotherhood organisations in the region: the Yemeni Al Islah, the Somali Islax and the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood. Each of these groups has their own characteristics: the Yemeni being the most politically powerful, the Somali being relatively global due to refugees fleeing from Somalia during the civil war but also being very effective as a social service provider, and the Sudanese still struggling after their confrontation with Hassan Turabi in the 1980s.

The report identifies particular traits that underpin the humanitarian engagement of the various Brotherhoods. Firstly, all of them have a clear political agenda, either striving to be or actually being politically active. Secondly, they have a common charity model in which they work to control charities through having a majority on the boards of the charities, often even denying that these charities are part of the Brotherhood organisations. They also maintain supranational links with other Brotherhoods through engagement in external Brotherhood charities and international professional syndicates. However, the report argues that the Brothers' network-based approach to humanitarian action is a product of the harsh political environment encountered by the various Brotherhoods, and of the scare following 11 September 2001, rather than an inherent and stable trait of all Brotherhood charities.

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The report shows that humanitarian actors that have engaged with Brotherhood charities, often without knowing it, this due to the network-based charity model of the Brothers, have been very satisfied with the results of the cooperation, and that such cooperation tends to moderate the Brotherhood projects. The report recommends partnerships with the Brotherhood as long as the Brotherhood's ideological agenda is borne in mind. The Brothers are an untapped resource for humanitarian efforts, and, although at times having radical views, are usually more moderate than other Islamist organizations in their local settings.

The report also explores the track record of the Brothers regarding their potential as peacemakers, and finds that their political agenda affects their mediation, although the Brothers remain important as parties in negotiations. The peacemaking potential of the Brothers is greatest at a local level, in negotiations with fellow Sunni Muslims.

1 The Brothers of the wider Horn of Africa: allies in the quest for peace and development?

1.1 Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn) is infamous; rumours, information and disinformation have been circulated by foes, friends and neutral parties since the movement started in 1928. Despite meeting resistance from both the Soviet block and later also the West, the ideas of the original Brotherhood have inspired a global movement with affiliated organisations in more than 80 countries.¹ Brotherhood organisations are involved in humanitarian and development efforts, they exist in war zones and are active in conflict areas. Several brotherhood organisations are also involved in peacemaking and reconciliation work. Brotherhood organisations may be tempting partners for Western development and reconciliation efforts, perhaps having comparative advantages compared to other organisations. For example their belief system, voluntarism, local knowledge, often considerable technical know-how and ability to survive in harsh environments seem to offer potential gains to development projects.

However, the Brotherhood has been accused of promoting radicalisation, of having two faces (changing its rhetoric from a

¹ These numbers are taken from the homepage of the organisation. See <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/>.

moderate approach to a more extreme approach according to the audience) and of promoting Islamic extremism.² The Brotherhoods' development and charitable work may thus come with a price – increased radicalism. The networks of the Brotherhoods are impressive; the question is whether they could become partners for Western actors in the struggle for peace and development, even in the light of the above accusations?

1.2 Religion, politics, peace, development

The rich literary tradition of the Muslim Brotherhoods has always stressed that they could and should emphasise charitable work. Members of the Brotherhood argue that Islam's basic values, for example an emphasis on charity and a strong condemnation of injustice, contribute to their efficacy as humanitarian actors.³ The promise of reward in the afterlife for an adherent provides additional motivation, promoting participation in religiously-based institutional and charitable activities, and providing a motivation that secular alternatives may lack. Many religious actors thus argue that they have a stronger motivation to operate in an ethical and just way and are less likely to focus on personal gain.⁴

Some scholars also emphasise the trust-building role of religion as well as its potential to mobilise the poor in a society. The World Bank for example discovered that religious leaders in developing countries were amongst the most trusted.⁵ As argued by Scott Thomas, religion can facilitate the building of social capital, defined as “the networks of social connections and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them”, and social capital is important in a developing country/post-conflict situation.⁶ Berger and Hefner define the religiously-inspired type of social capital as Spiritual Capital.⁷ Several other researchers have

² Vidino, Lorenzo (2005), “The Muslim Brotherhood's conquest of Europe”, *Middle East Quarterly* 12 (1). Leiken, Robert S. and Steven Brooke, The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood, Foreign Affairs. *March/April 2007*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Thomas, Scott, “Building Communities of Character: Foreign Aid Policy and Faith-Based Organizations”, *SAIS Review* xxiv, no. 2 (2004), 137-138.

⁷ Berger Peter & Robert W. Hefner, W. R. (2003), *Spiritual Capital in Comparative Perspective*, unpublished paper. Available at <http://www.metanexus.net/spiritual%5Fcapital/pdf/Berger.pdf>, 3.

recognised religion, or indeed any stable belief system, as having potential advantages for development actors; one such advantage is that religion can create local acceptance and a local ability to develop local solutions. Ver Beek claims that “the failure to recognise the centrality of their spirituality ultimately robs the poor of opportunities to tap into whatever strength, power and hope that this dimension gives them”.⁸ Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar share Ver Beek’s view that the spiritual sphere represents a mobilising resource.⁹ Jeff Haynes discusses religion as an emerging element in public life and international relations; Haynes’ view is that secularisation is sustained in many parts of Western society but not in many other parts of the world. Instead of secular political ideologies, he suggests religion, perhaps allied with nationalism or communalism, as a mobilising oppositional ideology.¹⁰

However, religion consists of core values, values which despite being reconstituted through a discourse remain relatively constant. An engagement with a strong religious development organisation could redefine what development is as well as the ideals of development. One example is Seyyed Hussein Nasr’s writings, where he explores development and the extent to which it distracts Muslims from their true nature, or enables them to live out their true purposes better.¹¹ Conflicts between development organisations and religious organisations are far from unknown. In the Horn the conflict between the Kenyan Catholic church and the HIV/AIDs prevention programmes is the clearest example, but female education has also been prevented by Islamic religious organisations. In the context of the Horn, Medhane Tadesse claims that the Brotherhood’s local organisation in Somalia, Al Harakat al-Islax, was instrumental in creating extremism in that country by spreading radical views in their educational programmes.¹² Several regimes in the Middle East have at times regulated and/or prevented the Brotherhood from participating in

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ellis, Stephen & Ter Haar, Gerrie, “Religion and Development in Africa” *Commission for Africa*, www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/background/ellis_and_ter_haar_background.pdf (accessed 8 May 2008).

¹⁰ Haynes, Jeff (1997), “Religion, secularisation and politics: a postmodern conspectus”, *Third World Quarterly*, 18 (4).

¹¹ Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Longman Group Ltd., London, 1975).
Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Kazi Publications, 1997).

¹² Medane Tadesse, *Al Ittibad Al Islamiya, Political Islam and the black economy in Somalia* (Addis Ababa: MT, 2003).

development and post-conflict reconstruction because of suspicions that the Brothers use charitable activities to promote political and religious goals.¹³ Following this line of argument, the charitable activities of the Brotherhood are more than pure developmental activities; they become part of a strategy to promote religious and political goals, a very efficient part as on the surface such activities seem to be apolitical.¹⁴

Several of the Brotherhood organisations also see them-selves as active peacemakers implementing peacemaking efforts, although such views are less common amongst the Brotherhoods than their strong focus on development and charities.¹⁵ The various approaches to religion and peacemaking can be divided into three.

The first approach stresses religion as an “ideational glue” creating common values – both in the case of intra-religious fighting and because of a claimed general focus on the value of human life including between religions. The Somali Al Islax has for example stressed the potential the Brotherhood has in bringing peace into conflict amongst Muslims; the Brotherhood is seen to represent the ideational link that binds various Muslims together.¹⁶ A religious mediator is thus seen as being potentially in a good position to negotiate between religious groups due to the person’s spiritual understanding and the common ground the person may have with the conflicting religious parties. Religion may also create bounds that transcend a particular type of religion, creating links between different religious systems. In his paper “Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding”, Mohammed Abu-Nimer emphasises how religious leaders that meet other leaders from different religions may be able to start seeing what Judaism, Islam and Christianity have in common instead of demonising each other and using religion as a tool to defend acts of violence.¹⁷ One of

¹³ Wiktorowicz, Quintan, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). Wiktorowicz examines the liberalisation of Jordan’s regulation preventing the Brotherhood engaging in development activities.

¹⁴ Wiktorowicz, Quintan and Suha Taji Farouki (2000), “Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics: A Case from Jordan”, *Third World Quarterly* 21 (4).

¹⁵ In Somalia the Brotherhood sees itself as providing a common foundation, Islam, that can create peace.

¹⁶ For statements from Brotherhood members on the Arta peace conference, see staff writer “interview with Abduhraman Badio” on the homepages of the international Muslim Brotherhood (www.muslimbrotherhood.co.uk).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Abu-Nimer's key points is that the main religions all have a non-violence attitude as one of their fundamental values. In his study of Islam he sees there is a large potential to present a more tolerant and pluralistic Islam than the ominous picture that has been presented in the West. According to Abu-Nimer, there is a large untapped reservoir there for peacemakers, activists and researchers.¹⁸

The second approach emphasises the reputation of religious organisations. Here it is not the common bond between co-religionists or the common values shared in the various religions that create the advantages in peacemaking; it is simply the good reputation of specific religious actors who can act as mediators. Cynthia Sampson for example emphasises how religious groups can be advocates of suffering groups, how (in some circumstances) they can function as intermediaries (including as hosts at peace conferences) and as observers preventing injustice, and how they provide institutional support for peace processes.¹⁹

The utilisation of religious persons in peace work is not new, but only in the last decade has religion gained a more formal position in peace negotiations.²⁰ Scott Appleby claims that "Religious actors have operated as third party intermediaries, either with the formal or informal sponsorship of a religious body or ecumenical organisation, or as an independent NGO".²¹ Appleby describes the positive results of religious peacebuilders but also states, "Where religion was welcomed as an important ingredient in statecraft, it was one actor amongst many, of course, and depended on other players' expertise in the political, economic and security dimensions of the conflict; nonetheless, religious peacebuilders can point to a modest but solid record of success in what seems to be merely the first phase of their involvement in conflict transformation. Indeed, religiously based conflict resolution may be the most rapidly expanding sector in the international field of conflict analysis and transformation."²²

¹⁸ Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, *Nonviolence and Peace Building: Theory and Practice* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003), 40.

²⁰ Appleby, R. Scott (1995), "Religious Militants for Peace", *S.AIS Review*, 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Religion may also contribute to conflicts. Ironically, this does not mean that religion does not have a potential role in its solution. Support for a moderate religious organisation may “crowd out” extremist organisations, stealing recruits from the extremists and converting them into more peaceful individuals. The Brotherhood is viewed by Leiken and Brooke as an antidote to the Al Qaeda religious extremism effect – their moderate Islamist ideology is said to offer an alternative to the more militant jihadist ideology of violent organisations, for example Al Qaeda.²³

Several scholars are highly sceptical about the religion-peace nexus. Luc Reyhler claims that “Several religious organisations are still perpetrators of different kinds of violence. In many of today's conflicts they remain primary or secondary actors or behave as passive bystanders.”²⁴ It is thus possible that religious organisations are as divided in conflict as society is; it is also possible that religious organisations are sectarian and offer aggressive views. Gilles Kepel claims that Brotherhood leaders employ different forms of rhetoric according to their audience, being more “moderate” when approaching non-Muslim leaders and more extreme in other settings.²⁵ Lorenzo Vidino claims that prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe supported extremist groups.²⁶ The Muslim Brotherhood leaders themselves have made controversial statements.²⁷

The lack of effective cooperation between religious organisations and professional players in conflict management and analysis is also said to be a limiting factor.²⁸

With the notable exception of Medhane Tadesse, few of the researchers exploring the activities of the Brotherhood have researched the local member organisations in the wider Horn of Africa, despite the fact that Brotherhood organisations in three of these countries – Yemen, Somalia and Sudan – are or have been

²³ Leiken Robert S. and Steven Brooke, The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007, 114.

²⁴ Reyhler, Luc (1997), “Religion and Conflict: Towards a Religion of World Politics?”, *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, 2 (1).

²⁵ Kepel, Gilles, *The war for Muslim minds* (London: Belknap, 2004), 280.

²⁶ Vidino, Lorenzo (2005), The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe”, *Middle East Quarterly* 12 (1).

²⁷ Staff writer “New Muslim Brotherhood Leaders: Resistance in Iraq and Palestine is Legitimate; America is Satan; Islam Will Invade America and Europe”, *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 655, February 4, 2004.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

amongst the strongest Brotherhood organisations globally. These Brotherhoods have operated large-scale development and post-conflict reconstruction projects (Somalia, Yemen and Sudan) as well as playing a large political role (Yemen and Sudan). The variations between Brotherhood organisations based in different countries means that lessons learned in the Middle East are not necessarily transferable to the Horn region. A gap in the literature on the Brotherhood thus exists.

This research project will attempt to determine whether the Brotherhood in the wider Horn contributes to dialogue or to conflict, whether it contributes to development and whether its activities prevent or create extreme jihadism. A study of the wider Horn dynamics may show if the Brotherhood has a role to play in development and peace negotiations, and the circumstances under which the Brotherhood may contribute to extremism.

1.3 Methods

This report aims to explore in depth several Brotherhood organisations, asking the following questions:

How do the beliefs of the Brotherhood influence their charitable work, and their roles as actors in peace processes and as political parties?

1. How are the Brotherhood charities organised?
2. To what extent do the Brotherhoods manage to coordinate their activities across the region and with their global leadership?
3. How do the Brotherhood organisations interact with Islamic radicalism?
4. To what extent can the Brothers serve as a partner of Western peace brokers or development agencies?

Importantly, the report does not claim to discuss the effects of engagement on brotherhood ideology, it does not discuss if western engagement with the brothers makes the brothers moderate their agenda. It rather focuses on the possibility of finding common goals between the brothers and other western

based organizations, and if these goals can be reached without negative implications.

Several serious methodological issues are encountered in exploring the above problems. Firstly, the identification and definition of Brotherhood organisations is potentially problematic. During field research we often encountered the expression “All Muslims are brothers”. Members of organisations such as the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims (SUPKEM) claimed to be Muslim Brothers, but on closer inspection the organisations were found to lack the fundamental ideological foundation of the original Muslim Brotherhood, the Brotherhood ideology of the founder, Hasan al-Banna.

Several Brotherhood organisations, such as Al Islax in Somalia and the Brotherhood of Sudan, have experienced divisions. Following all the fragments of the Brotherhood organisations was too large a task for this project. Since the report studies international interaction, it seemed sensible to limit the focus to organisations accepted as having Brotherhood ideology by the International Shura Council of the Brotherhood, the weak international structure that attempts to coordinate the various Brotherhood organisations. This would allow the study of informal and formal interaction between the various Brotherhood chapters that actually recognise each other as being Brotherhood, thus studying the global dimension of a single movement. The definition of a Brotherhood organisation in this report will thus have two criteria: one focusing on a common ideological platform, and the other focusing on an organisational attachment to the international Muslim Brotherhood.

Brotherhood organisations in the core areas of the Middle East, Syria, Iraq and Egypt have been explored in detail before.²⁹ The Brotherhood organisations in the United States and Western Europe, although a less common subject of research, have also

²⁹ See for example Rubin, Barry (2007), “Comparing the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, Egypt and Lebanon”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 11:2; Roy, Olivier, *Globalised Islam – The Search for the New Ummah* (London: C.Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd., 2004); Lia, Brynjar, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt – The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1942* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Ltd., 1998); Munson, Ziad (2001), Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, *The Sociological Quarterly* 42 (4); Eickelman, Dale and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Mitchel, Richard P., *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

been studied.³⁰ This report focuses on one region only – the wider Horn of Africa. Brotherhood organisations in this area have never been explored in depth before.³¹ It also studies the Brotherhoods active in societies with war and hunger, being thus ideal to study the Brotherhood's charities and peace negotiation attempts. The report is based on 11 months of field studies in Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Yemen and Sudan, and approximately 40 interviews with Brotherhood leaders were conducted. The report will first explore what it is to be a Brother and how they see themselves. It will then explore the three larger Brotherhoods of the wider Horn: the Sudanese Brotherhood, the Yemeni Al Islah and the Somali Islax. The last chapter will conclude the report.

³⁰ Ian Johnson (2008), "The Brotherhood's Westward Expansion", *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Volume 6, 2008, 71; Vidino, Lorenzo "The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe", *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2005, <http://www.meforum.org/article/687> (accessed 4 September 2008).

³¹ In the Somali case Andrew Le Sage's PhD thesis studied Al Harakat al-Islah (the Brotherhood's local organisation) but also other organisations. Interview with Abuhraman "Badiow", Nairobi, 17 May 2009.

2 What does it mean to be a Brotherhood member?

2.1 The fikra

All Brotherhoods – at least if they are to be accepted by the oldest Brotherhood organisation, the Egyptian one – have to be founded on the Brotherhood *fikra*, a loose form of ideology based on the works of the classical Egyptian Brotherhood leaders. Elements vary from state to state and from Brotherhood organisation to Brotherhood organisation, but a common interest in the writings of the first Egyptian Brotherhood is something that binds the organisations together.³²

There are several sources of the Brotherhood *fikra*, of which the writings of Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) are most important. His writings are read by Brotherhood adherents across the world, and his foundational works are essential and generally accepted, remaining part of the foundation of what it is to be a Brotherhood member. A second scholar often mentioned in relation to the Brotherhood is Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). However, while radical groups in the Islamic world often draw upon his work, he is controversial in a Brotherhood setting, with Brotherhoods disagreeing on his relevance and on the emphasis of his works as well as over the interpretation of his work.³³ A perhaps more important but underestimated source of modern Brotherhood thought is Hassan al-Hudaybi (1891-1973) who refuted many of

³² Interview with Abduraman Badio, Nairobi, 8 April 2009; Interview with Ali Gawish, Khartoum, 21 June 2009.

³³ Interview with Abduraman Badio, 17 April 2009; Interview with Dr. Futhu, 6 August 2008; Interview with Ibrahim Hudaiby, 13 August 2008.

Qutb's ideas.³⁴ Hudaibi was the leader of the Egyptian Brotherhood during one of the Brotherhood's most critical times; his thoughts on organisation and politics were crucial for the present-day Egyptian Brotherhood, which itself is a model for Brotherhoods around the world. A last individual to mention is Umar al-Tilmisani (1904-1986), the third leader of the Brotherhood. Of the above-mentioned scholars, Hasan al-Banna clearly stands out in importance; his ideology has become a platform for the Brothers, part of the definition of what it is to be a Brotherhood member.

Another source is the general Brotherhood discourse – in some instances a discourse that has gone global, taking place in the whole Brotherhood organisation. Articles in several Brotherhood-related journals and web pages, from the old *Ikwban journal* to the present-day *Ikwbanweb*, are important and also surprisingly dynamic as non-Egyptian Brotherhood members are frequently interviewed and engage in ideological discussions.

The first Brotherhood organisation, the Egyptian Brotherhood, was established in 1928 and became the centre of the Brotherhood's expansion into other countries. The original Brotherhood was modernist in the sense that it was open to adapting Western technology and Western organisational models, which were deemed to be more efficient than the models then existing in Egypt. It adopted a selective attitude towards Western civilisation, praising Western science and work ethics – a very different approach from most other Salafist movements at the time which rejected everything Western.³⁵ This feature was to become a vital trait of the general *fikra* of the Brotherhood.

A second notable trait was ecumenicalism. The Brotherhood accepted many interpretations of Islam and aimed to bring various Islamic organisations together. Hasan al-Banna for example stressed that one should be careful when condemning general religious practices held by a righteous population, as this practice could overshadow political goals.³⁶ Separate views regarding the

³⁴ Zollner, Barbara H.E., *The Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Hudaibi and Ideology*, Rutledge Oxon, 2009, 2-3

³⁵ Several early texts illustrate this, the Al Aqaid for example quoting Isaac Newton, Descartes and Herbert Spencer. Lia, Brynjar, "The Society of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt" (Ithaca: Reading, United Kingdom, 1998), 77.

³⁶ Ibid.

particular features of Islam were accepted and even cherished, and common denominators were stressed. Banna did condemn some groups within Islam, for example the Qadiyanis of Pakistan and the Bahias – the main argument against these two groups being that their leaders claimed to be prophets. However, in general the need for inter-Islamic cooperation was emphasised.³⁷

A third notable trait was anti-imperialism. The original Brotherhood was a protest movement against colonialism; it was in many ways a product of the humiliation of the British control of Egypt and the more general humiliation of non-Muslim countries controlling most of the Muslim world. The struggles against Zionism and the establishment of an Israeli state, followed by support for Palestinians, were crucial elements in the Brotherhood's policy. Today it should not be forgotten that Hamas is viewed by many Brotherhoods as a sister organisation, and that the last international high-level gathering of Brotherhoods was purely to raise funds for Hamas.³⁸ The Brotherhood also stood against parts of the Western value system. Banna criticised the West for “secularism, licentiousness, individual selfishness and materialism”.³⁹ Later, excessive materialism, forced secularism (in the Muslim world) and sexual freedom were to be amongst the values that the Brotherhood fought against.

A fourth notable trait was a focus on social justice. The Brotherhoods themselves claimed to be Islamic socialists.⁴⁰ As stated above, materialism, the greed involved in it and a focus on profit were seen to be amongst the worst values of the West. All Muslims were deemed to be equal and charity was seen as an integrated part of Islam.

Most importantly, the Brotherhood argued that religion and politics were inseparable. Indeed, the goal of the organised Brotherhoods has always been political: the resurrection of the Islamic caliphate, consisting of all traditional Islamic regions, based

³⁷ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1993), 217.

³⁸ This was said to have taken place in 1998. Interview with Anonymous Brother x1, Interview with Anonymous Brother x2.

³⁹ Al-Banna, Hassan (1978), “Between Yesterday and Today” in *Five tracts of Hasan Al-Banna*, ed. Charles Wendell (UCP).

⁴⁰ Al-Gazali, Muhammed (1962), “Min Huna Na'lam”, 135.

on an Islamic order (Al-Nizam Al Islami).⁴¹ These two goals officially remain major aims of the Brotherhood today, although they are recognised by many Brotherhoods as being a long-term goal. The establishment of an Islamic order (Al-Nizam Al Islami) in existing states became a highly important short-term goal, and several Brotherhoods see this as an end-goal in itself, viewing the resurrection of the caliphate as unrealistic. After all, the former caliphate is currently divided into a multiplicity of states, from Bosnia in the north to Somalia and even parts of present-day Kenya in the South.⁴²

Al-Banna called for a gradualist approach in which the Islamic order could be attained. The Islamic order was to come into existence through three stages. The first stage, of communication and propagation, was aimed at exposing society to the true Islamic principles. The second stage, of mobilisation and organisation, was to see the movement select and train its active members. The third stage, of execution and implementation of the Islamic rules and principles, would then follow, when society was completely transformed into an Islamic society. The first nucleolus in this process was the individual, in that the individual would contribute to the creation of the Muslim family; the family-support networks were then to be built, and the Muslim order was to follow. The original Egyptian Brotherhood had an armed branch, the so-called Special Section, and several of Hasan al Banna's works do recommend jihad, in its violent sense, as an obligation. However, this remained confined to self-defence, and there seems to have been a change in attitude within the Brotherhood over time.⁴³ Hassan al-Hudaybi actively attempted to disband the Special Section and refuted the idea of revolutionary change. His refutation was to become an important feature for the Brotherhood.⁴⁴ The individuals were to be changed through education and *Da'wa*, (*preaching*), through political participation rather than through violence.⁴⁵

Moreover, Hudaybi also led an ideological offensive against the "Qutbists" within the Brotherhood. These were not necessarily

⁴¹Al-Banna, Hasan (1978), "Between Yesterday and Today" in *Five tracts of Hassan Al-Banna*, ed. Charles Wendell (UCP), 31.

⁴² Mitchell (1993), 270.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Zolner (2009), 4, 23.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

followers of Qutb (his works can be interpreted in many ways) but rather Brothers who believed that Muslim leaders should not be supported if they were illegitimate and that they should be actively fought.⁴⁶ The Qutbists lost the struggle, which led to many radicals leaving the Brotherhood altogether.⁴⁷ The Brotherhood became more hesitant in designating fellow Muslims as *kufr*, non-believers, thus separating themselves from the present-day Wahhabi and radical traditions, and became less willing to use violence against other Muslims. The restraint against violence increased, and Umar al-Tilmisan later emphasised the “holy interdiction against aggression and offensive attacks, and justice towards enemies and mercy”, claiming that the two last factors were part of Al-Banna’s jihad concept.⁴⁸ Non-violence is today a crucial aspect of Brotherhood *fikra*, and the condemnation of violence is an important aspect of the rhetoric of present-day Brotherhood leaders, even being argued as a criterion for membership in the international organisation.⁴⁹ Hassan al-Hudaybis’ concept of *sabr* (patience) is essential when it comes to social change.⁵⁰

The actual political structure of the end result of the Brotherhood’s push for change, a state based on the Islamic order, is not well defined. Hasan al-Banna suggested that the relationship between the ruler and the ruled was based on a social contract.⁵¹ Most Brotherhood scholars seem to agree that the social contract can be broken if the ruler fails to uphold it. If the ruler fails to uphold Sharia he can, and should, be first warned, then guided and then, if necessary, removed. The Brotherhoods thus are against a secular state; Islam should dominate, it is granted the right of “suzerainty and dominion”.⁵² It seems that it is the *Al-Nizam Al Islami*, the Islamic order, that is the most important element in any governance structure designed by the Brotherhood, and the most important element in creating this order is Sharia.⁵³ The exact governance structures become of secondary importance, being

⁴⁶ Ibid, 46.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Al Timisan, “Do missionaries have a program?”, 8.

⁴⁹ Abed-Kotob, Sana (1995), *The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (3), 334.

⁵⁰ Zolner, Barbara H.E. (2009), “The Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al- Hudaibi and Ideology”, 140.

⁵¹ Mitchell, Richard (1993), *The society of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1993), 234-235.

⁵² Al-Banna, Hassan (1978), “To what do we summon Mankind” in *Five tracts of Hassan Al-Banna*, ed. Charles Wendell (UCP),71.

⁵³ It seems that Hudaiby suggested popular elections.

undefined by Islam, as long as there is some form of popular control either through election (not necessarily containing a party system) or some other form of structure which makes the voices of ordinary Muslims heard. Theocracy, rule by religious scholars, has apparently been criticised by most of the Brotherhood philosophers, including radicals such as Sayyid Qutb (with Hasan al-Hudaybi as a notable exception), although theocratic elements such as a clerically-based upper house in a popularly-elected parliament have been suggested by other Brotherhood philosophers.⁵⁴ Most Brotherhood scholars seemed to agree that some form of scrutiny of candidates for the parliamentary body, the *Ahl Al-shura*, is necessary. Banna emphasised the scrutiny that ordinary Muslims should hold over a government, and Brotherhood leaders such as Muhammad Hudaibi claimed that parliamentary government could satisfy the needs of an Islamic order. Today several notable Brotherhood scholars, such as Isam al-Aryan, argue for democracy. The International Shura Council of the Brotherhood in 1995 recommended democracy as the best form of government.⁵⁵

The political transformation of the various Brotherhood organisations has been painful, and although several Brotherhood organisations have created political parties to take part in elections, this has been contested – partly because the Brotherhood sees itself as attempting to reach Muslims outside its organisations and is afraid of the factionalism created between it and other Muslims when founding a Brotherhood-based party. Central Brotherhood philosophers such as Hasan al-Hudaibi seemed to have rejected the polarisation process altogether, wanting access to the whole of the Ummah regardless of political views.⁵⁶

Traditional Brotherhood *fikra* suggests a relatively open approach to Sharia. The Brotherhoods suggest that Sharia should be based more directly on the Sunna (stories about the statements the prophet Mohammed made to his followers while he was alive) and the Quran, disregarding much of the traditional interpretations used by religious scholars. The use of *ijtihad*, the independent interpretation of the legal sources, *qiyas*, the process of analogical reasoning in which the teachings of the Quran are compared and

⁵⁴ Mitchell (1993), 243, Zolner (2009), 119.

⁵⁵ Mitchell (1993), 235.

⁵⁶ Zolner (2009), 29.

contrasted with those of the Hadiths are frequently employed. *Ijima*, the consensus of the Ummah (Islamic Scholars), is also a tool to adapt Sharia for today. Basically:

“The fixed and unchangeable tenets of the Islamic Shari’ah are very few and they are very basic principles designed to achieve justice, fairness and social and economic equality as well as to protect human rights and dignity, to preserve honor, soul, property and sanity against wrongful attack, and to protect the teachings of religion and the system of state. There can always be an access to *Ijtihad* to deduce views that are appropriate to global, economic, and social changes,”⁵⁷

This does not mean that the Brotherhoods necessarily recommend moderate interpretations of Sharia. Al Banna for example recommended *hudud* punishment, capital punishment that includes stoning and amputation.⁵⁸ However, Brotherhood *fikra* in general also strongly argues for human rights, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom of education, and freedom of possession to be promoted within the framework of Sharia. The situation of rights within the realm of Sharia is important; rights do not exist on their own but have to be grounded in the Quran and are dependent on the Quran. This means that Western-style human rights are different from Brotherhood-style human rights in several important aspects: conversions away from Islam remains punishable, as do blasphemous statements regarding the prophet, and usury.⁵⁹

2.2 Brotherhood, charity and development

Hasan al-Banna explicitly stated “Amongst our aims are to work for the reform of education, to war against poverty.”⁶⁰ While Communism is seen as only taking care of man’s material needs,

⁵⁷ El-Hudaibi, Mohammad Ma’mun (1995), *The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood*, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=813>.

⁵⁸ Al-Banna, Hasan (1978), “To what do we summon Mankind?” in *Five tracts of Hasan Al-Banna*, ed. Charles Wendell (UCP) 89.

⁵⁹ Awad, Adulqadir (1951), “Al Islam wa-awdauna al-siya-siya”, 195-201.

⁶⁰ Al-Banna, Hasan (1978), “Between Yesterday and Today” in *Five tracts of Hassan AlBanna*, ed. Charles Wendell (UCP), 33.

and Christianity is seen as only taking care of man's spiritual needs, the *fikra* of the Brotherhood is seen as focusing on both.⁶¹ Central to the Brotherhood *fikra* was the view that all Muslims are equal, and that economics cannot be separated from the principle of social justice. Thus, the Brotherhoods stressed labour rights and land reforms. *Da'wa*, missionary work, was traditionally seen as part of education. In many ways the Brotherhood was somewhat reminiscent of the Jesuits, in that education was seen as part of spreading Islam and "the people are the source of all powers"⁶² was emphasised. Education was also seen as a way of countering the influence of malign Western values, while positive Western traits should be taught. Development was seen as a way of promoting the political process that would lead to the *Al-Nizam Al Islami*, and for African states this was a prerequisite.

The Brotherhoods were relatively moderate regarding gender issues. Females could work outside the house and should be educated, but their primary task nevertheless remained in the household. The Brotherhood also had females making Quran comments (*tafsir*), indicating respect for the female ability to act as guides for religious questions, although the position of sheik, religious leader, was still restricted to men.⁶³

2.3 Recruitment and organisation

The organisational structures of the Brotherhood are highly influenced by the fact that most of the Brotherhood organisations faced very difficult environments. Initial recruitment often took place through friends and family networks. One common strategy was the study-circle system, where a few individuals got together usually after meeting in a mosque. The original Brotherhoods had professional organisations, where doctors, lawyers and so on were organised into separate groups. The Brotherhoods' tendency toward syndicalism remains notable, and the present-day Brotherhood in Egypt controls the professional associations for lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists and pharmacists.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ramadan, Said (1953), "Malim al-Tariq" (Damascus) 44-51.

⁶² Mitchell (1993), 350.

⁶³ Al -Mar'a bayn al-bayt wa'l mujtama, 127.

⁶⁴ Abed-Kotob, Sana (1995), "The Accommodationists Speak: Goals and Strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (3), 329.

Emphasis was, and still is, placed on the establishment of student Brotherhood groups. Originally, student networks, friends and family were crucial for recruitment. Today, Brotherhoods exist in the border zone between political movement and civil society, having traits of both types of movements.

The Brotherhood membership was graded, in the sense that there were several types: general membership, associate membership, active membership and jihad membership.⁶⁵ Members had to prove themselves in various ways in order to rise in membership status. From our field studies we can see similar tendencies today, it generally takes time to become a full member, and membership is a gradual process.

2.4 An organisation or a movement?

In his article “The impact of Islamism on the Arab System”, the author Ali E. Hillal suggests that the Brotherhood tried to establish an international organisation as early as 1937 and was successful in doing so in the early 1980s. The status of the international Brotherhood organisation was probably influenced by both the international and the Egyptian political climate for such activities. The active periods were from the late 1930s and early 1940s followed by the period when Nasser was president from 1956 to 1970, when many members of the Brotherhood fled Egypt, and the beginning of the 1970s when Nasser’s presidential period came to an end. The president after Nasser, Anwar El Sadat, had a mixed policy toward the Brotherhood but in 1974 he introduced the open-door policy, one consequence of which was greater freedom for the Brotherhood. After that time the Brotherhood has experienced and is still experiencing a difficult period, following Hosni Mubarak’s take-over of power from 1981 and due to strict anti-terrorism laws that affected many Islamist organisations after 11 September 2001. The latter seems to have seriously affected the international organisation attempts. However, communication has continued, partly because of the syndicates of which Brotherhood leaders were members.

⁶⁵ Muslim Brotherhood: Structure and Spread, 13 June 2007; Brotherhood web

The international structure is weak, consisting of a Shura Council founded in 1982. A general conference was held in 1998 but none have been held since. The international Brotherhood also has an information office in London.⁶⁶ Another important global institution but controlled by the Egyptian Ikhwan is the Brotherhood website. The website is read by 4,000 to 7,000 users every day, with the traffic coming mostly from the USA. On the website the Brotherhood presents its views through interviews and statements with key members, together with news stories and information concerning the Muslim world.⁶⁷

The Egyptian Brotherhood still plays a special role, and its leader acts as a spiritual guide for other Brotherhood organisations. Recent turbulence within the Egyptian Brotherhood, however, may change this. It could also have a general effect on the Brotherhood *fikra* as the supreme guide, Muhamed Akef, was claimed to have stepped down from office in October 2009 but later refuted this claim citing internal conflicts as the cause of the confusion.⁶⁸

The Muslim Brotherhood remains an organisation that is globally coordinated, albeit very loosely, but also a movement of individuals and organisations sharing an idea of the Brotherhood *fikra*. This *fikra* is changing through social processes but the change is slow. It also seems that the various national Brotherhood organisations enjoy considerable independence.

⁶⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Ezzat, Cairo, 1 September 2008.

⁶⁷ Interview with Miriam Ali, Assistant Editor of Ikhwan Web, Cairo, 30 August 2008.

⁶⁸ Staff writer, "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood sees leadership struggle" *Associated Press*, 30 October 2009.

3 The Yemeni Brothers, Al Tajmu al-Yamani li al-Islah (the Yemeni Congregation for Reform)

3.1 Humble beginnings

The early history of the Yemeni Brotherhood is rather confusing. The earliest roots are probably to be found in the Nadi al-Islah (the Reform Club) formed in Cairo 1934, based more on the philosophy of Rashid Rida and Muhammed Abdu than on that of Hasan al-Banna. In 1939 the organisation changed its name to Al-Katib al-Ula (the First Battalion). One of the leaders of the group was the Algerian Muslim Brotherhood leader, Fudai al-Wartilani, a former close associate of Hasan al-Banna, the Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood.⁶⁹ Although this group was short lived, Wartilani was to have a key role in the spread of the Brotherhood concept in Yemen, being involved in anti-Shia activities together with the Egyptian Brotherhood.⁷⁰ Individual Brothers were also involved in the struggle against the Imam until his deposition in 1962. Various Brotherhood-related organisations seem to have appeared and disappeared until the late 1960s when sources generally agree that an organised Brotherhood organisation was established. By the early 1970s it appears to have been led by Abdul Majeed al-

⁶⁹ Parallel to this, Mohammed Mohmoud Al-Zobeiry, who had studied in Egypt, established the "Preaching for Good and Condemning Evil society", based on Al-Banna's principles, but this disappeared within two years. A more clear Brotherhood organisation, the Katiba al Shebab al-Yemeni, was established in 1940 but many Brotherhoods chose to remain outside this organisation.

⁷⁰ Vom Bruck, Gabriele (1998), "Disputing Decent-Based Authority in the Idiom of Religion – The Case of the Republic of Yemen", *Die Welt des Islams, New Series*, 38 (2), 154.

Zindani, who had been inspired by the Egyptian Brothers during his stay in Egypt although he was more radical than the Egyptian organisation.⁷¹ Due to his controversial and radical profile, he was later replaced by Yassin Abd al-Aziz al-Qubati.⁷² During the 1980s the Brotherhood expanded, establishing in 1985 its own newspaper “Al-Sawah” which still exists today. In 1988 the Brotherhood won many seats in the consultative council in the election.⁷³

Islah was formed on 13 September 1990, when political parties became allowed in Yemen. The organization was in many ways a marriage of convenience between Sheik Abdullah Al-Ahmar, the sheik of the Hashid tribal confederation, one of the largest tribes, and the more urban-based Brotherhood still led by Yassin Al-Qubati, who remains the spiritual leader today.⁷⁴ Despite being a merger between a Brotherhood group and a non-Brotherhood group, it was accepted as Yemen’s Brotherhood by other Brothers, for example being frequently mentioned as the Yemeni Brotherhood on the Egyptian Ikwhan website.⁷⁵ Indeed, Al Islah had and still has some very clear non-Brotherhood components. The anti-Shia profile of Al Islah attracted many Wahhabists, creating a Wahhabi sub-group within the organisation. The sub-group was strengthened by Saudi Arabia’s desire to found projects launched by Islah members.⁷⁶ The Hashid tribal confederation was strongly represented within the organisation. It should not be forgotten that tribal elements have a large influence on Yemeni politics in general; tribes represent counter-powers to an autocratic state. For many citizens, they are a shield to repression and to the authoritarian ambitions of government. Patrimonial and families

⁷¹ However, no sources report that a firm Brotherhood organisation existed before 1962. It seems likely that a Brotherhood group was founded around 1969 and existed during the 1970s. Michaelle Brower claims that al-Zindani was one of the founders and led the group from 1969 to 1978. Al Zindani himself claims that he joined the Brotherhood in the early 1970s. Michael, Browsers (2007), “Origins and Architects of Yemen Joint Meeting Parties”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39, 2007. Staff writer, “Interview with Al-Zindani”, *newyemen.net*, 27 January 2009, <http://www.newyemen.net/view.php?sid=2785> (accessed 22 February 2009).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Robert D. Burrows (1991), “Prelude to Unification: The Yemeni Arab Republic 1962-1990”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (4), 496.

⁷⁴ Phillips, Sara, 2008, 138.

⁷⁵ See for example Al-Awsat, Aharq, “Yemen: Who will succeed Sheik al Ahmar?” www.ikwhanweb.com accessed 8 December 2009, for an Egyptian acknowledgement of this.

⁷⁶ Weir, Shelag (1997), “A Clash of Fundamentalisms; Wahhabism in Yemen”, July-September 1997, 22.

also remained important for the inner dynamics of the organization.⁷⁷

Despite having these somewhat odd groupings in their organisation, the Brothers appear to be in control. During the field studies conducted for this report it was frequently claimed that the Brotherhoods had and still have a dominant role.⁷⁸ It is frequently stated that Islah had an inner informal group of pure Brotherhood members that met and maintained a Brotherhood profile within the party.⁷⁹

The organisation followed the other Brothers in their emphasis on Islamic order and Sharia, it emphasised Sharia as a foundation for the Yemeni constitution, and even led an unsuccessful boycott of the 1991 constitutional referendum because the constitution mentioned Sharia as “the main” and not “the only” source of the constitution.⁸⁰ By December 1992 Islah organised a Peace and Unity conference under the slogan “The Quran and the Sunna supersede the constitution and the law”.⁸¹ The party was also close to the ruling party, the General People’s Congress (GPC) – not surprisingly given the fact that the Brothers had been close to, and even integrated into, the regime’s decision-making structures since the late 1960s. Individual members had also played an important role in the founding of the Islamic Front in 1979, an organisation that fought as allies of President Saleh against the southern Yemeni state during various clashes in the 1980s. Islah members had thus often been amongst President Saleh’s allies in his struggle with the southern-based Marxists and close to the rulers since at least the late 1960s.

There were also both family and personal ties between Islah and the GPC. Notable leaders such as Abu Bakr al-Qirbi were for example members of both parties, and the Islah candidate even withdrew in several electoral districts out of courtesy to the GPC in 1993.⁸² The closeness to the GPC and the anti-Marxist creed

⁷⁷ Phillips, Sarah (2008), *Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 139

⁷⁸ Interview, Nabil Al-Soufee, former member of Islah, Sanaa, 25 March 2009.

⁷⁹ Browers, Michael (2007), “Origins and Architects of Yemen Joint Meeting Parties”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39, 579.

⁸⁰ Carpacio, Shelia (1993), “Elections and Mass Politics in Yemen”, *Middle East Report*, November-December, 3.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid, 407.

meant that Islah was one of the sources behind the tension that led to the short civil war in 1994, with supporters of one of al-Ahmar's sons even attacking the YSP offices in the northern city of Hajja with a rocket launcher.⁸³ During the war, Islah leaders such as Abd al-Wahhab al-Daylami recruited Islamists to fight against southerners. Far from being a force for peace, Al Islah was a willing partner in the ruling regime's war efforts. However, it seems that this was driven by the organisation's tribal elements rather than by the hardcore Brothers.

Although Islah appeared stable in public, there were rumours of discord within it. It was claimed that the general advisor of Islah, Abdulmajeed al-Zindani, was opposed to the International Shura Council of the Brotherhood.⁸⁴ Following Hassan Turabi's attempts to establish parallel organisations, the latter actively sponsored al-Zindani's attempts to take full control of Islah, partly using Saudi funds, leading to Islah becoming associated with Wahhabism. In this sense, Zindani became a player supporting Turabi in his struggle against the Egyptian Brotherhood. This led to a weakening of Zindani's position in the organisation, but Zindani nevertheless remained the speaker of Al Islah's Shura until February 2007.

As the GPC needed Islah less and less so the good relationship between the two parties diminished. Malpractices in the voter registration made Islah enter a cooperative arrangement with other opposition groups, joining the Higher Coordination Council of the Opposition (HCCO) in April 1997. Entrance into the HCCO meant that Islah was cooperating with the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), a party based on Islah's old enemies in the south, a radical move that demonstrated a will to compromise on ideological issues. However, for a brief period after 1997, Islah returned to their allies in the GPC, signing cooperation agreements with the latter in several districts. Nevertheless, Islah was deeply offended that the GPC failed to offer them anything for these concessions; in fact one Islah cabinet minister (endowment) was removed and his position offered to the conservative Shia-Zaydi party, al-

⁸³ Browsers, Michael (2007), "Origins and Architects of Yemen Joint Meeting Parties", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39, 569.

⁸⁴ The latter, born in Badan, had appeared in politics as a Yemeni Minister of Guidance in the 1970s and later as a delegate to the Islamic World League, and was known for his lack of tribal ties.

Haqq.⁸⁵ Islah was reluctantly drawn again towards the HCCO even if it was ideologically opposed to the alliance. By 2000, Islah had acknowledged the socialists' grievances and had even threatened to boycott the 2001 local elections (although in the end it participated).⁸⁶

There were two crucial changes in Islah's policies over these years. The first change was the acceptance of the socialists as potential allies. Socialists, which Islah previously had accused of being non-believers, were seen as more valuable than the believers in the ruling party, mainly because of the latter's repressive techniques and autocratic practices.

The second change was Islah's heightened emphasis on democracy. When Islah felt that it was being deceived its rhetoric stressed democratic values, and it was this emphasis on common values that kept them with the socialists. It must not be forgotten that Islah had already achieved the goal of basing the Yemeni constitution on Sharia, but after achieving this the organisation emphasised the dialectic process of election so much that it chose to support its old enemies, the socialists.⁸⁷

As the central Brotherhood *fikera*, Al Islah had emphasised the existence of a consultative democratic process and Sharia as the foundation of a state, but now the emphasis of party-based democracy followed. It seemed that it was Islah's modernist wing, consisting of Mohammed Al-Yadumi, Abd al-Wahhab al-Anisi and Mohammad Mohammed Qahtan, core members of the Brotherhood within the party, that drove the process. In his role as editor of Al Shawa, the previously-mentioned newspaper of the Brotherhood, Yadumi had an excellent opportunity to influence the party members. Qahtan was also a champion of women rights, and declared that females could rule better than President Salah.⁸⁸ The American National Democratic Institute also played a key role in this process by bringing Islah together with other parties, leading to the formation of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP).

The cooperation within the platform had its ups and downs; the moderate wing of Islah did not succeed in pushing their views

⁸⁵ Browsers, 2007, 569.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 572.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 576.

through and in 2003 the moderates failed to get female candidates nominated. However, changes in Islah's Shura Council – including the replacement of Zindani as speaker in favour of deputy speaker Muhammad Ali Ajlan, and the election of 13 women in the 130-member body for the first time in Islah party history – seem to indicate that the moderates were gaining strength.⁸⁹ In the end Zindani became a liability to the party when he was accused by the United States of funding Al Qaeda, and by issuing relatively radical statements, claiming amongst other things that single female witnesses should be discarded in court cases because of the inferior female brain.⁹⁰ Zindani also encountered resistance within Islah. In the autumn of 2008 there was a call for a Vice and Virtue Committee, a committee intended to be a moral watchdog.⁹¹ Al-Zindani was to lead the committee. However, the Islah rejected the idea from the very start, publicly demonstrating that Zindani's influence was limited.⁹²

Today Al Islah seems to be moderating. However, it still has a more extreme wing, as well as a tribal wing that remained conservative. While Zindani, the most prominent extremist, seems to be out of favour, the tribal element led by Sheik Abdullah remained powerful until the latter died on 29 December 2007.⁹³ The moderate Al-Yadumi now leads Al Islah, potentially indicating a renewed will to cooperate in creating political solutions for Yemen. However, it should not be forgotten that the organisation still maintains a strong focus on the implementation of Sharia, and that the will to compromise was founded on the Islah opinion that this framework was already present in the Yemeni constitution.

What does the history of Islah demonstrate regarding its peacemaking potential? Firstly, the organisation has been a belligerent in conflicts, has often been quasi-religious in nature, and has been anti-Shia and anti Marxist providing recruits in the Yemeni government's wars with both groups. However, it has also demonstrated the ability to moderate its ideological stand within

⁸⁹ Ibid, 582.

⁹⁰ United States Treasury, Office of Public Affairs (2004), "United States Designates bin Laden Loyalist", February 24. *Iqra TV (2008)* "Women Are Subject to Menstruation, When Their Endurance and Mental Capacity for Concentration Are Diminished", 23 October 2008.

⁹¹ Browsers, 2007

⁹² Interview, Mohammed Mohammed Qahtan, Political Leader in Islah, 26 March 2009.

⁹³ This was against Islah's own constitution.

the framework of the wider Brotherhood *fikra* with Sharia as a foundation. Its moderate elements are gaining power. Security in Yemen is declining and Islah has recently been willing to act as a peacemaker. Yemen today is a torn country, with the so-called Houthi rebellion, the *Shebaab Al-Moumineen*, growing in the north.⁹⁴ In recent years this conflict has also been tribalised with several northern tribes joining the conflict *en masse* and by 2009 Saudi Arabia was drawn into the conflict while the government of Yemen also accused Eritrea and Iran of supporting the insurgency. Conflict between southern Yemenis and the government has also escalated since 2007 due to southern discontent with what they see as governmental corruption and bad governance of the southern provinces. A loose southern opposition against the government, the so-called Southern Movement, has been formed.

In 2009, Al Islah acted to block the centrifugal forces in Yemen, but then only as part of the Joint Meeting Parties, organising several national conferences and dialogue meetings of which the so-called *multaqa al-tashawur* (dialogue reunion) and the conference of *al-inqadh al-watani* (saving nation) were the largest. A national rescue plan was launched in September 2009 and a peace committee, known as the Dialogue Preparation Committee, has been established. The JMP argued for the internationalisation of peacemaking, as well as for conferences to identify problems and find solutions. The main focus, both on behalf of Islah and under the larger JMP umbrella, has been on peacemaking between the popular Southern Movement and the government. This perhaps illustrates the weakness of Islah in dealing with another Islamist group, the Houthis, with whom they had previously been actively fighting, as well as the ability of Islah's ally in the JMP, the socialists, to deal with old allies in the south. However, all the belligerents have so far rejected the JMP peace attempts.

Al Islah is still regarded with suspicion by radical Shia insurgency groups, while the government accuses Islah of using the current crisis to gain power. However, Al Islah remains one of the few stable organisations in Yemen, and must be part of any solution to the various Yemeni conflicts. It is also more moderate than most

⁹⁴ The Houtists, as they call themselves, originated amongst the Yemeni Shias with links to the old Imamate. The rebellion was started in 2004 by followers of Hussein Badr Eddin al-Houthi who held grievances against increasing Wahhabist influence and against what they saw as the Yemeni government's support for the United States in Iraq.

Islamist organisations in Yemen. In this sense, despite its difficulties Al Islah has become a crucial element in peace negotiations, both as a negotiation partner but also as part of the JMP, a facilitator for peace negotiations between the government and the south.

3.2 Charity

Charity remains an important feature for Islah. The party programme for example states that it aims to:

“Give charity regularly, and hold fast to God. Hone the individual’s spiritual energies by consolidating sound faith in Allah. Consolidation on the principle of pluralism, within the framework of adherence to the faith of society and Shariah. Justice, which means giving priority to the achievement of social equilibrium, before other demands, and that the aim of development should not be just to increase GDP. On top of this, it is important to tackle poverty, deprivation, and social imbalance, as well the achievement of streamlined distribution of the fruits of economic and social development between rural and urban areas and between the governorates of the Republic of Yemen.”⁹⁵

The Islah activists see themselves as offering a faith-based alternative to secular NGOs, and anti-corruption work is seen as a major tool in increasing the welfare of Yemenis, as are traditional economic growth strategies.⁹⁶ There are also formal groups within the party that deal with development issues. According to one of the highest political leaders in Islah, Mohammed Mohammed Qahtan, the economic circle within the party, a working group, also explores development as does the circle working with the civil society.⁹⁷ According to law 1, 2001, Article No. (19) of the Code of

⁹⁵ Under this top level is the Secretariat, with the General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary, followed by the executive sections. There are ten executive sections, examples of which are the Political Affairs section and the Organisations and Unions Affairs section. After the General Secretariat there are six offices two of which are the Office for Women’s Affairs and the Office for Student Affairs.

⁹⁶ Interview, Dr. Najeeb Saeed Ghanem, Islah and parliament member, Sanaa, 28 March 2009.

⁹⁷ Interview, Mohammed Mohammed Qahtan, political leader of Islah, Sanaa, 29 March 2009.

Yemeni NGOs, any charitable associations with a political basis or with activities that promote religious figures are banned.⁹⁸ This naturally makes Islah reluctant to publicly engage in charity; nevertheless such connections exist.⁹⁹

Some notable figures within Islah have nevertheless been involved personally. Zindani him-self engaged in charity related work, al-Zindani's al-Imam University of 4-5000 students, is according to researcher Sara Philips also known for intolerant teachings.¹⁰⁰ Yemen also has two major charitable organisations: the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW) and the Al-Saleh Social Foundation for Development, the latter being linked with the ruling party. The director of the CSSW, Abdulmajeed Abdulkawi Farhan, has claimed that there is no connection between the two organisations.¹⁰¹ Interviews during field studies strongly indicated the opposite, as two of the 15 members of the managerial board are GPC members and the organisation has good contact with the president. There is a general understanding that there are connections between the Islah Party and the CSSW.

The CSSW is Yemen's second largest NGO and is de-centralised, offering services mostly within the charitable sector but also within development. The CSSW has offices in all the governorates, and in 2007 had 23 branches and 236 committees. It is led by a General Assembly, a monitoring committee, an administrative board and a supreme consultative council. Below these there is an executive board, below which is the general director. Furthermore, the CSSW is divided into eight divisions: Family Development, Youth Development, Sustainable Development and Social Care, Information and Resources, Orphans/Sponsorship, Health, Financial and Administration/Affairs, and Planning and Development. It is also one of the few NGOs that operate in every governorate in Yemen. The CSSW director stressed that the organisation helped all the needy and did not have an Islamic guiding philosophy for their work. He further explained that the organisation had begun as a relief programme, and that they were

⁹⁸ Staff writer, "Global Trends in NGO Law", <http://www.icnl.org/knowledge/globaltrends/globaltrends1-1.htm> (accessed 20 April 2009).

⁹⁹ Nabil Al-Soufee, a former member of Islah, interviewed in Sanaa, 25 March 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Phillips, Sarah (2008), *Yemen's Democracy Experiment in Regional Perspective* Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 145

¹⁰¹ Al-Omari, Moneer, "Islah Charitable Society, General Majeed Farhan", *Yemen Post*, 17 March 2008.

involved in charity, micro-credit, hospitals and schools.¹⁰² They are also involved in the University of Science and Technology, one of the largest universities in Sanaa, but claim that they control less than 50 per cent of it.¹⁰³ According to researcher Anahi Alaviso-Marino, the CSSW's success is due to its moderate political discourse and the central role it attributes to Islam.¹⁰⁴

The CSSW seems to use Islamic principles in some of its projects, but these principles are notably absent from cooperation projects with the United Nations. Janine Clark writes that much of the work carried out by women in the CSSW can be seen as a form of activist work from a religious or political point of view or from both.¹⁰⁵ The CSSW has been working with Westerners on two projects. The first project is to help get children out of labour and into society, which is a cooperation project between the Swiss NGO, CHF International, and the CSSW. The project's donor, the US Department of Labor, has set strict guidelines. International Sources with intimate knowledge on the project were pleased with much of the cooperation with the CSSW.¹⁰⁶ However, the gender aspect seemed to have been a problem – no women had been hired as managers, there were also indications that there had been attempts to do *Dawa* in relations to the project. Ideology has left its print on the project as it practised Islamic spacing, where the rule is to have two years between each child. They were also educating Imams but were using UN and human rights guidelines in that work.¹⁰⁷ The Dutch embassy also engaged the CSSW on a development project entitled “Female Genital Mutilation Awareness Raising in Hadhramout”. The Dutch embassy was very positive, as local connections were important for practical results; using Islamist discourse to alter the opinions of even local sheiks was proving to be highly effective. However, the Dutch diplomats also stressed that the CSSW was conservative according to Western standards, and that there was a powerful conservative

¹⁰² Interview, Dr. Mohammed A. Al-Qubati, General Manager of the CSSW, Sanaa, 22 March 2009.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Alaviso, Anahi, “Political Creativity in the republic of Yemen: Sana’ani women intertwining networks of political participation”, *Columbia University*, 2005-2007.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with anonymous x3, Sanaa, 15 March 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Djoeke Adimi, First Secretary of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, 1 May 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with anonymous x4, 28 March 2009.

group within Islah. This was nevertheless seen as a necessary sacrifice since Yemeni society in general was very conservative.¹⁰⁸

When evaluating the effect of Islah's development and charity work, it should first of all be remembered that Yemen is one of the poorest and most conservative Muslim countries, and that the government does not have full political control over the country nor the resources to help everyone that needs help. If an organisation manages to help needy persons or to play a key part in developing for example a village, the organisation will be highly regarded by the people. It is also essential that workers in the CSSW come from the same cultural and religious background as the people they are helping.¹⁰⁹ Due to this, the CSSW seems to have a strong standing amongst the Yemenis.¹¹⁰ In order for the Islah party to benefit from this, it may be sufficient for Yemenis in general to believe there is a link. The charitable and development work carried out by Islah may also have a downside. One interviewee expressed a highly critical view: "There are strict rules involved for those who want to receive money or help from the Islah's charitable and development organisations", "Money will be given so a child can attend school, but there will be strict religious regulations regarding behaviour". A former member of Islah and the Brotherhood went on to say: "But I discovered after a while that the interest for the people in Islah was an obstacle for reform and development...", "As a man, you don't go with women, and you must not smoke or listen to music. These conditions are for normal people, not for the sons of the sheiks." In other words, while charity and development work is offered, it has strings attached to it.¹¹¹ Another interesting aspect of Islah charity is the position that the middle class plays in it. Janine Clark is one of the few researchers that have studied the Islah party and their charitable organisation. Clark claims that the charity work carried out by women connected to the CSSW leads to a strengthening of the middle class.¹¹² She finds that the charity work is only open to women with a certain income and that it is also a ladder leading to personal development for the women who manage to participate

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Interview, Djoeke Adimi, First Secretary of the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands, 1 May 2009.

¹¹⁰ Interview with anonymous x4, 28 March 2009.

¹¹¹ Interview with Nabil Al-Soufee, a former member of Islah, Sanaa, 25 March 2009.

¹¹² Clark, A. Janine, 2003, 29.

in the charity work.¹¹³ She perceives the charity work carried out by the women as a type of activism that is accepted by the family and society. In this sense the CSSW fails to empower the locals that it attempts to help – there are clients rather than partners in the development process, which is a practice common amongst Western NGOs but which has many negative implications, including preventing client ownership of the charity programmes.

What are the consequences for potential Western development partners? The Islah NGOs have shown themselves to be efficient and reliable partners, but with an ideological agenda. However, this agenda has been moderated when cooperating with Western organisations on specific projects, which may mean that engagement is advisable – it will have a moderating effect. Importantly, it is far from sure that such engagement will moderate the ideology of Islah itself, that is a longer debate, nevertheless, it might moderate specific projects, enabling Islah and western partners to achieve mutual gains. There are differences within Islah, and various affiliated NGOs may be dominated by various elements. Thus, caution must be exercised when selecting NGOs, and radical elements within Islah should be shunned. Tribal elements can be supported in a mindful manner, with the awareness that they may exclude benefactors outside the tribe.

3.3 The end result

Despite declining numbers of voters, Islah is a strong organisation operating in difficult circumstances, dealing with a repressive regime and a tribal society. It is well respected amongst other Brotherhoods, despite having elements that are relatively alien to the Brotherhood *fikra* amongst its rank. The strength of the organisation is perhaps the reason why the research team failed to identify organisational links with other Brotherhoods beyond friendly information coordination and ideological discussions – external support by other Brothers was not needed.

When trying to explore the result of Islah's charitable and development work, it becomes necessary to identify its religious and political views. Since Islah contains a highly varied group of

¹¹³ Ibid.

people, many different views can be found. The degree of religious conservatism will vary between sub-groups within Islah.

Both Islah and the CSSW are moderated by the society in which they live and work. One aspect in which Islah shows such moderation is in female participation. Women are relatively well represented amongst the higher leadership of Islah– 20 per cent of the Shura members are women, a surprisingly high number for a society such as Yemen.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Islah is moderated by the other political parties in the Joint Meeting Parties coalition, and specific projects engaging CSSW are moderated by many of the Western donors and the UN.

The CSSW's charity and development work supports a population that badly needs their help, thereby creating stability. Within the educational field there is nevertheless the possibility that the curriculum and teachers within Islah-affiliated NGOs can be highly conservative. It is reasonable to expect that the beneficiaries of Islah's charities will be influenced by the degree to which they follow Islah's ideological and political ideas. In addition, they will be influenced by working together in a holy and humanistic mission that can also be seen as a type of activism role to develop the country and the Ummah. Any partnership to develop Yemen requires a close dialogue between the Western partners and the Islah NGOs in order to take care of the interests of both parties, and Islah's ideological leanings should not be ignored.

Nevertheless, Islah is an important partner in developing Yemeni society and its potentials should not be ignored. Islah will also be an important partner in any peace process that takes place in Yemen. However, it is doubtful that in itself it can contribute directly to peacemaking as its tribal links and ideological platform make it too controversial. Thus, strengthening its cooperation with other organisations and perhaps establishing links with Shia organisations are important features. It is also important to not be naive when cooperating with Islah – it contains both radical and moderate elements, and any cooperation with the organisation should support the moderates. Nevertheless, Islah ideology in itself is amongst the more moderate belief systems in Yemen.

¹¹⁴ Anahi, Alviso-Marino, "Women Respond to the Vice and Virtue Committee Part III", *Yemen Observer*, 13 September 2008.

4 Brothers in Diaspora, the Somali Harakat Al Islax

4.1 A beginning in exile

The Brotherhood has been active in Somalia for more than half a century. In pre-independence Somalia several of the founders of the Somali Youth League (SYL), an organisation that spearheaded the Somali struggle for independence, had personal connections with the Brotherhood. However, the SYL was a nationalist organisation and was far from the Brotherhood in ideology; it was to take time before the Brotherhood developed an organisation in Somalia. The founding in the late 1960s of the Al Nadha organisation, which was not a Brotherhood organisation, was a milestone and was highly important in understanding the Islamist organisations in Somalia. The organisation opened up a large Islamic book collection to the general public, and most of the future leaders in all the Islamist organisations active in Somalia, apart from the Harakat Al Shebab, had some connection with it.

The Al Islax itself, the Somali Brotherhood, was created on 11 July 1978 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁵ Al Islax's first leaders were an integrated part of the global Brotherhood movement; most of them had already been active in non-Somali Brotherhoods – one joining the student Brotherhoods in Saudi Arabia while studying in that country and at least three others being members of Brotherhood-affiliated student organisations in Sudan. Several Egyptian Brotherhood members were also active advisors for

¹¹⁵ The five were Sheik Mohamed Ahmed Nur "Garyare", who was to become the organisation's first leader, Dr. Ali Sheik Ahmed, who was to become the organisation's third leader, Dr. Mohamed Yusuf, Sheik Ahmed Rashid Hanafi, in whose house the meeting was held, and Sheik Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, who was to become a Shura council leader.

members of the leadership.¹¹⁶ In this sense the organisation was influenced by the highly international student Brotherhood organisations of Saudi Arabia and Sudan. Islax had a strong and close relationship with its Egyptian Brothers and received indirect funding from Saudi Arabia. It did not view itself as a pure Somali organisation but had activities in other Horn countries, and some of the Islax leaders wanted to create an organisation spanning the whole Horn. Even today, Al Islax has activities in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Islax is the closest thing to an organised Kenyan or Djiboutian Brotherhood but is mostly active amongst the Somalis in these countries.¹¹⁷

The founding of the organisation needs to be placed in a Somali context. The five founders of Al Islax were partly inspired by a decade of increasing Islamist activism within Somalia.¹¹⁸ Siad Barre took power in Somalia in 1969, replacing the republic with a military dictatorship. Somalia already had several loose Islamist organisations – their ideologies were far from clear but contained Brotherhood elements. In the beginning, the Siad Barre regime attempted to co-opt these organisations, and prominent Somali Islamists gained high positions within the Barre regime.¹¹⁹ However, Siad Barre’s secularist agenda inevitably created conflicts with these organisations. The main event to cause the breakdown of the Islamist/Barre regime relations was the implementation of a Western-style divorce law in 1975 and the subsequent execution of ten religious scholars who protested against this law. The founding of Al Islax must be seen in the light of these events of 1975. All five leaders who created Al Islax in 1978 were highly critical of the regime, and one of the main aims of the new organisation was to provide information about the negative aspects of the Barre

¹¹⁶ Garyare joined the Muslim Brotherhood as early as in 1962 while he was a student in Saudi Arabia, University of Imam in Riyadh. Sheik Mohamed Ahmed Nur “Garyare”, the first leader of Al Islax, had been taught by the Egyptian Brotherhood Sheiks Manaa al Khatam and Muhamed Al Wakeel during his stay in Saudi Arabia. The two Egyptian sheiks were later to act as his informal advisors during the founding processes of Al Islax.

¹¹⁷ Barud maintains that the activities in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya were small-scale

¹¹⁸ Interview with Abduhraman Badio, Nairobi, 4 January 2009; Interview with Sheik Dr. Mohamed Sheik Ali on 5 January 2009.

¹¹⁹ Garyare became the Director of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs. He escaped the country after the execution of the ten leading Islamic scholars in 1975. General Ahmed Jilacow, one of the security intelligence chiefs who sympathised with the sheik, warned him that the process of his arrest was complete. He left Mogadishu two hours before security agents arrived at his house to arrest him. He travelled towards the Somali/Kenyan border and after a difficult and tedious trip finally reached Kenya safely. Interview with Abduhraman Badio, Nairobi, 4 January 2009.

administration to Somalis and others, and to “Make the people aware that the current government was not acceptable”, as Al Islax’s first leader, Sheik Garyare, expressed it.¹²⁰ The Somali Brotherhood thus started out as a political and highly regime-critical organisation.

Establishing a regime-critical organisation under suppressive rule demanded caution and secrecy, and the initial organisational structure of Al Islax was influenced by the hostility between Barre and its first leaders. The Somali Brotherhood top leadership chose to remain in Saudi Arabia so as to stay out of the reach of the Barre regime, and communication with the Somali organisation had to be conducted using codes and secrecy.¹²¹ Al Islax’s organisation within Somalia was carefully established by recruitment based on trust, often through studies-related friends and family networks; and the process was slow and meticulous in order to avoid arrests. The organisation was highly active amongst Somali students outside Somalia, and multi-national student Brotherhood organisations also played an important role in recruitment.¹²² Candidates were hand-picked, and recruitment policies seemed to have followed a Russian Bolshevik pattern: Islax wanted to recruit amongst the elite and to enlist the future leaders of Somalia, and they actively recruited from religious leaders and from doctors, engineers, army officers and social scientists. The Somali Brotherhood leaders believed that the Somali intellectual elite could change Somali society more quickly. Such thinking may have slowed down the initial recruitment process, as the low-profile elite-focused recruitment drive did not proceed quickly and the organisation remained very small throughout the 1970s. Furthermore, the way of recruitment, through friends and family networks, was to create problems for Al Islax. Somali society was traditionally organised along clan lines using patrilineal family ties to define social groups, which in turn played an important role in political life. The Brotherhood showed outright contempt for clan-based politics, and strongly maintained that Islam transcended clans. However, the family/network-based recruitment together with special traditions within some clans

¹²⁰ Interview with Sheik Mohamed Ahmed Nur “Garyare”, Dubai, 19 January 2009.

¹²¹ Siad Barre actively attempted to convince Saudi Arabia to extradite them back to Somalia, but the Saudis sided with the Somali Brotherhood and allowed them to stay.

¹²² One of their future top leaders, Abduhraman Badio, was for example recruited through a Canadian student Brotherhood organisation in 1985.

ensured that some Somali clans were overrepresented within the Brotherhood organisation. Ikwhan recruits often came from the wider family of the original members, resulting in a clan bias towards for example the Sheikal and Aw Hassan clans, clans with a traditional religious role in Somalia.¹²³

The recruitment model was also to provide several advantages for Islax. Communication with Western organisations became easier as many of Islax's members had been educated at the same universities as their Western counterparts within the Western diplomatic community and Western-based NGOs. Islax also retained prominent religious scholars within its ranks from the best Middle-Eastern universities, scholars with considerable local, if not regional, popularity. Nevertheless the method of recruiting allowed room for conspiracy theories, and kept ordinary Somalis out of its ranks.

At an early stage in its history, Al Islax managed to recruit several notable sheiks and to engage them directly in its recruitment efforts, which helped the organisation to expand.¹²⁴ By November 1979 the blind Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan was invited to join the organisation and his activities were to play an important role in the organisation's recruitment efforts in this period, despite government prosecution forcing him to flee Somalia for six months in 1981.¹²⁵ In 1980 Sheik Hassan Dahie was recruited and he was to become equally important in Hargeisa. Barud served as the resident leader of Al Islax in Mogadishu, while Sheik Hassan Dahie reorganised Islax in the north of Somalia. During this period the organisation was strongly focused on attracting more members, and used informal preaching in the Friday sermons in mosques to do so (never revealing that they were members of Al Islax). Al Islax also hosted clandestine book circles. The various

¹²³ In 1979, Al Islax only had members in three cities: the capital Mogadishu, the second largest city Hargeisa, and Borome, and the total membership was less than 100. The first leader in Mogadishu was Muhamed Ibrahim Suley, now very active in the ARS-Djibouti group and previously one of the most prominent members of the Sharia courts. The Hargeisa leader was Abdulqadir Ali Jama. The clans that were overrepresented were the Sheikhal and the Aw Hassan sub-clans of the Hawiye clan.

¹²⁴ According to Islax's homepage, the first recruiting attempt was a tour by Abdullah Muahmed Abdullah Risa and his Brother Mohammed Yusuf. This delegation contacted Bayaha Sheik Ibrahim (Sule), Sheik Abdul Ghani Sheik Ahmad and Sheik Ibrahim Abdullah Al-Sharif. Mahmoud al-Sharif (Mriaadi) Sule was probably the most famous, and his son would become one of the leaders of the Sharia Court Alliance. Yusuf, Muhammed, "Memories of the Movement", www.islax.org/ (accessed 5 June 2009).

¹²⁵ Interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

Islax groups seem to have been organised around groups of five core members.¹²⁶

Al Islax's members were not the only Brothers in Somalia; in fact the ideology was fairly common amongst Somali Islamists. Al Itthad Al Islamiya, which later was to gain the reputation of being Wahhabi-Salafists, also had clear Brotherhood elements within its ranks.¹²⁷ However, Al Islax was unique in Somalia in the sense that it had close connections with the international Brotherhood. Al Islax's first refusal to join Hassan Turabi's attempts to create a pan-Islamic organisation in Africa (there was to be a second refusal in 1992) increased Al Islax's popularity amongst the Egyptian Brothers. The move probably contributed to Al Islax being formally accepted into the international structure of the Brotherhood in 1987 (after a two-year screening process). Al Islax also became the first sub-Saharan Brotherhood organisation to gain a seat in the International Shura Council of the Brotherhood the same year.¹²⁸ The relationship between the Egyptian Brotherhood and the Somali Brothers was close and strong with a mutual admiration between the parties.

Al Islax spread moderately and by the mid-1980s all major cities in Somalia had an Al Islax chapter. However, this growth was bound to lead to unwanted attention from the regime. In 1986 ten oppositional sheiks were arrested by the Siad Barre regime, of which three were Al Islax. Sheik Gurhan Nur Barud was amongst those arrested. Barud's sentence was a setback for Islax as he was perhaps the most important Al Islax sheik residing in Somalia at that time.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, the small size of the organisation made it easier to survive, as did its clandestine and network-type structures. The arrests did only minor damage to its recruitment efforts. Islax held elections for leadership for the first time in 1988.

¹²⁶ Interview with Ali Bashe, Nairobi, 15 December 2009; Ali Bashe joined in 1984. Interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

¹²⁷ Interview with Sheik Dr. Mohamed Sheik Ali on 5 January 2009.

¹²⁸ There seems to have been several agreements and negotiations between the Brotherhoods and there is disagreement within Al Islax and amongst former Islax members regarding the exact date of the entrance into the international brotherhood organisation. However, the leader of the organisation at the time who was relatively close to the process, Sheik Muhammed Ahmed Nur, maintains the year was 1987. Sheik Guran Nur Barud offers a likely explanation for the confusion when he states that joining was a process with many different agreements to be signed. Interview with Sheik Mohamed Ahmed Nur "Garyare, Dubai, 19 January 2009; interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

¹²⁹ Barud was sentenced to death but the verdict was never to be carried out. Two other sheiks of Al Islax, Mohamed Sheik Farah and Mohamed Omar, were given 15 years each.

Members of Al Islax's "High Council" were elected by a "parliament" (*Majlis al-Shura*) for five years with their period in the *Majlis* being limited to two terms, a tradition that has lasted until the present day, while the Council's leader was retained for a longer period. Al Islax also became more active in the charitable sector at the same time.

Charitable efforts within Somalia were conducted according to a network model common to the Brotherhoods around the world. There were no Al Islax charities; rather there were individual Al Islax members engaged in charitable work, heavily supported by other members. Schooling projects in Hargeisa may serve as an example of the network model of Al Islax. The African Muslim Agency of Kuwait (now known as Direct Aid) was involved in schooling projects in Hargeisa, said to be eventually helping more than 2,000 students, and was managed by individual Islax members on the ground. The individual members had made contact with the international aid organisations through the wider network of Islax.¹³⁰ Individual Al Islax members also used their influence to gain positions within Brotherhood charities based in other countries. Many Islax members became local representatives for Gulf-based charities with strong connections to the Brotherhoods of their respective country.¹³¹

The charitable efforts of Al Islax blossomed as war began in the north of Somalia, and the former colony of Great Britain, Somaliland, was to become a major location for Al Islax's humanitarian efforts. The war in the north coincided with a relaxation of the Barre regime's surveillance and repression targeting Al Islax. The period 1987-1991 was in many ways the organisation's "spring time". Siad Barre was at the time focusing on the emerging rebel movement; in the words of Al Islax's first leader, "Barre was engaged in war, he did not pay attention to us".¹³² Activities in the Somali National University were expanded with a focus on the Faculty of Languages (particularly Arabic studies) and the Faculty of Islamic Studies, and also within Medicine.

¹³⁰ The projects were locally led by Abdullah Omar.

¹³¹ Interview with Sheik Mohamed Ahmed Nur "Garyare, Dubai, 19 January 2009.

¹³² Interview with Sheik Mohamed Ahmed Nur "Garyare, Dubai, 19 January 2009.

During this period Al Islax attracted new members who were to influence the organisation heavily. By 1988, Ibrahim Dusuqi, a relative of founder member Ali Sheik, joined the organisation and he was to become crucial in charity work as well as in recruitment. His weekly lectures at Masjiid Imam Mosque in Waberi became famous. Dusuqi's Islamist messages, focusing on Islamic and Somali unity, were increasingly popular in a Somalia that was becoming more and more fragmented along clan lines. In 1989, Gurhan Nur Barud was granted amnesty and was released; one of the most effective Islax sheiks was out of prison. Things looked good for Al Islax: its veteran sheiks were back, and it was becoming increasingly popular while its traditional enemy, the secular regime of Siad Barre, was getting weaker.

During its first ten years, the Somali Al Islax had established several traits that were to remain important for the organisation. For example, the organisation was highly dependent on the Diaspora, and had an excellent relationship with the Egyptian Brotherhood. However, several important traits were to change. The Somali Brothers were highly political in the period 1978-1988 and, like most Brotherhoods, had based their charitable efforts on clandestine networks – a product of the Barre regime's attempt to stop Brotherhood influence, and typical of most Brotherhoods around the world. The period 1989-1999 was to see a depoliticisation of the Somali Brotherhood; it was to see the rise (and fall) of direct and public Al Islax charities (in the sense of the charities being an integrated part of the Islax organisation); and it was to see the strengthening of Islax's peace and reconciliation work, leading to a refinement of its ideology.

4.2 Warlords and the state collapse (1989-1999)

The next ten years were to test Islax severely; it had to change from being an organisation navigating in a Somalia governed by a totalitarian regime to an organisation navigating in an anarchic Somalia. As Somalia changed from being a totalitarian state into an anarchy, the dialectical approach of the Brotherhood dictated that politics should have a lower priority and charity a higher one, so Islax became depoliticised in a Somali context. The Somali civil

war turned Al Islax into a global organisation with members in Canada in the west to India in the east as the Somali Diaspora spread. A new leader was also elected in 1990, Dr. Mohamed Ali Ibrahim, as Garyare had moved to Canada and the organisation felt that this was too far away to be able to run the organisation. It was also to develop relatively stable ties with the Kuwaiti Brothers, the Jama'iat Al Islax, and the International Islamic Charity organisation.

By 1989, the Islax leaders understood that the end of the Barre regime was approaching but they also understood their organisation's weaknesses and saw that it lacked membership. Al Islax saw the weakness of the Siad Barre regime as an opportunity to reverse the secularisation trend of Somalia, but knew that it had little chance to do so by itself. So it looked for help to another organisation, the Al Itthad Al Islamiya. The two organisations had their differences: Al Itthad was closer to Turabi's Sudan and had a strong Wahhabi-Salafist element. Several former members of Al Islax, such as the Al Itthad leader Sheik Ali Warsame, had left Islax to join Itthad, which led to some hostility between the two but also to better connections as former members stayed in touch with their friends in Islax. Another important feature was their organisational differences as Al Itthad was already more fragmented.

The Brotherhood elements of Itthad and the old network connections made several Islax members regard Itthad as a potential friend and ally in the new circumstances. The idea was that the two large Islamist organisations could better withstand the coming storm together, but the two organisations were simply too different ideologically. In the end the attempt to create an alliance was to lead to increased hostility and rivalry between the two organisations. Islax also attempted to open a dialogue with the Barre regime – in 1990 the organisation coordinated the so-called “free speech” memo, submitted to Siad Barre and signed by 128 individuals.¹³³ However, not all moves towards the dying regime were reconciliatory: Islax expressed its protest against the atrocities of Siad Barre's police forces and played an important role in the bloody demonstrations of “Black Friday” on 14 July 1990.¹³⁴

¹³³ Interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

¹³⁴ On July 14 1990, Al Islah organised demonstrations from the mosques in protest against the

In 1990-1991, the Barre Regime rapidly lost control of Somalia. The pace and speed of the state collapse in 1991 came as a shock to Islax. The organisation wanted regime change but instead of the Barre regime it got anarchy as clan-based armed factions continued fighting. The new dynamics of Somali politics were not based on Islam but rather on clanism and warlordism. During this first year of Somalia's anarchic period, the organisation lost many of its active members and field leaders to the civil war, most notably its deputy chairman and his chief political officer.¹³⁵ Furthermore, communication between leaders in the Diaspora and field leaders within Somalia was interrupted due to the destruction of communication facilities.¹³⁶ The war caused a huge displacement amongst the members and the leadership ranks. Regrouping was difficult since most of the leaders did not know each other due to the previously underground nature of the organisation. The scope of displacement was vast and included almost all villages and localities in Somalia and its neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. Migration to Europe, the USA and Canada had started and also intensified. Nevertheless, Al Islax had major advantages to enable it to cope with the new situation: it was founded in the Diaspora and had been led by Diaspora Somalis since its start, and it had established methods for dealing with the situation. Islax was to be one of the few Somali organisations that managed to survive the state collapse more or less intact.

The organisation refocused itself due to the new circumstances, with development and humanitarian projects as well as reconciliation becoming larger parts of its activities. The realignment was signaled by the establishment of the Zeylac charity in 1991, Al Islax's first central Somali charity.¹³⁷ It was confirmed in the first all-inclusive conference of the Islax leadership after the outbreak of the civil war held in 1992. According to Abuhraman Badio, the present-day holder of the

detention of leading Islamic scholars after the killing of Bishop Salvatore Colombo, the Vatican representative in Somalia. About 200 Somalis died on "Black Friday".

Also, the "Waa Islaamah" communiqué was released later by Islah, calling on the president to resign and safeguard the country from imminent civil war.

¹³⁵ Sheik Ali Dayar was the deputy chairman of Islah in Mogadishu and Inj. Cise was the chief political officer. They actively participated in the efforts to prevent civil war and to mobilise Islamic scholars to play a role in that endeavour. This information was collected from Dr. Ibrahim al-Dasuqi and Sheik Ahemd Hassan al-Qudubi who worked closely with them. Mogadishu, 20 December, 1999.

¹³⁶ Interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

political and reconciliation portfolio in Islax, emphasis was placed on: (a) reconciliation between warring parties “*Islab dat Al-bayn*”; (b) intensification of Islamic missionary work “*Al-Da’wa Wal Irshad*”, and (c) focus on relief operations and education “*Al-Igatha wa tacliim*”. This was a major change from the previous decade in which purely political goals, i.e. regime change, had been the main aim of the organisation. However, the focus on *Da’wa* remained.¹³⁸ The political activities of Al Islax were scaled down drastically to commenting on international actors (often criticising the United States and Israel), supporting fellow Brotherhood organisations in other countries (supporting the Egyptian Brotherhoods during Turabi’s attempt to outflank them in 1992, and strongly supporting Hamas), and making comments and critique, particularly targeting the old rival Al Itthad Al Islamiya. From 1991 to 1999, Islax never took sides in the Somali civil war.¹³⁹

The *Islab dat Al-bayn* pillar was built up just as the war started, and Al Islax’s Abdelaziz Haj Ahmad participated as early as during the 1991 (June-July) Djibouti peace talks.¹⁴⁰ Al Islax also attempted to participate in the Addis Ababa preparatory negotiations in January 1993 but was refused entry, not being taken seriously by the international community.¹⁴¹ In March 1993, during the second major round of negotiations, they were allowed to attend and a delegation led by Dusuqi participated. In one sense the statements of the organisation during the conference laid down the philosophical groundwork for the peace and reconciliation efforts of Islax during the 1990s. Islam was seen as the “glue” that could bind the various factions in Somalia together, and as the means to

¹³⁸ Abdurahman M. Abdullahi ‘Baadiyow’, “Al Islax Movement in Somalia”, Hiraan, December 2008.

¹³⁹ The rivalry, if not love/hate relationship, with Al Itthad Al Islamiya also caused some semi-political actions. In 1992 the two organisations clashed over Turabi’s second attempt to create an African Islamist umbrella organisation, Islax again siding with the Egyptian Brotherhood in this debate while Itthad sided with Turabi. In mid-1992, when Al Itihad launched its military bid to wrest control of north-east Somalia away from the SSDF, Al Islax issued a communiqué in Mogadishu implicitly criticising AIAI and calling for an end to the conflict. Nevertheless, these undertones were overshadowed by charitable efforts as well as peace and reconciliation-related efforts.

Islax leaders such as Dusuqi criticised the United States for its intervention in 1993-1994, even going as far as to claim that the intervention was a part of a plan to crush Islam. However, at the same time Islax criticised the lack of Islamic involvement and the solidarity with Somalia. Bashir, Sharif, “The absence of Islamic efforts in Somalia” *Qadhaya Danhyia* 144 (3), see also al-Safi, Mahsin (2006), “The attitude and reaction of the Islamic groups to US/UN intervention in Somalia 1991-1995” in Omar Ahmed Saeed, Africa in the post cold war era (Khartoum, *International University of Africa*). According to Dusuqi, the sole exception for the lack of interest was the Hayat al-Igatha al Mslamiyd charity.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Woodward (1996), “US Policy and the Horn of Africa” (London: IB Tauris), 161.

¹⁴¹ Staff writer, “Notes” *Qadhaya Danhyia* 144 (3), Interview anonymous x1 in Mogadishu, April 2009.

transcend clan differences as all clans were Muslims.¹⁴² Tribalism and personal lust for power was seen not only as hindrances to peace but also as being outright sinful. The implementation of Sharia was important for all peace efforts.

However, in general Al Islax was more successful in its reconciliation work at local level.¹⁴³ In 1994, Al Islax formed the Brotherhood-affiliated Somali Council for Peace and Reconciliation (SCPR) with Abdurhman Badio as the chairman.¹⁴⁴ The organisation established two reconciliation centres in Mogadishu and satellite centres in the regions. These centres acted as neutral ground for reconciliation between clans. The centres also became staging grounds for so-called “peace caravans” of over 100 people travelling to conflict-affected towns in Somalia.¹⁴⁵ The Islax activists would encamp in a specific location for a period of days or weeks, and would put pressure on community leaders and elders to reach a peaceful settlement to their conflict. In this way Islax engaged in peace work in Mogadishu in 1994 and in Kismayo and Middle Shabelle, and succeeded in Hiiran and Gedo. According to the movement itself, it conducted 20 reconciliation conferences in 1995 in Benadiir, Middle Shabelle, Hiiran, Galguduud, Gedo and lower Juba.¹⁴⁶ The last “peace caravan” organised by Al Islax and the SCPR was in the Hiran region in 1995.

The SCPR also supported the formation of local Sharia courts in Shabelle (Jowhar) and Gedo in early 1995, with more being planned.¹⁴⁷ Following Brotherhood doctrine, Al Islax saw *Da’wa* efforts as being part of reconciliation, and believed that a comprehensive grasp of Islam would lead to peace. Thus, by 1995 it had opened 11 local Islamic centres and had held meetings with clan leaders to reconcile but simultaneously informing them

¹⁴² Safi, Mahsin (2006), “The attitude and reaction of the Islamic groups to US/UN intervention in Somalia 1991-1995” in Omar Ahmed Saeed, Africa in the post cold war era (Khartoum, *International University of Africa*), 105.

¹⁴³ Interview with Abdurhman Badio per e-mail, 7 April 2009.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Abdurhman Badio per e-mail, 7 April 2009.

¹⁴⁵ In its heyday, SRC maintained four offices – one in north Mogadishu, one in south Mogadishu, one in Kismayo and one in Belet Weyne. All of these are reported by Dusuqi to still exist today, although each is essentially dormant unless they are mobilised to respond to a particular need.

¹⁴⁶ Islax web (2009), “رود” http://www.islaax.org/arabic/index_ar.htm accessed 9 December 2009.

¹⁴⁷ Safi, Mahsin (2006), “The attitude and reaction of the Islamic groups to US/UN intervention in Somalia 1991-1995” in Omar Ahmed Saeed, Africa in the post cold war era (Khartoum, *International University of Africa*), 107.

about Islam.¹⁴⁸ While recognising and approving traditional brotherhood doctrine, they also realised that a particular grasp was needed in order to handle the special Somali context. The so-called “Dealing with Reality” policy was formed in order to deal with the organisational consequences of the Somali state collapse. Demonstrating the new global nature of Al Islax, the issue of “how to deal with the new realities” was first discussed in Toronto, Canada, after the fall of the regime in January 1991, and its outcome was published in an internal pamphlet. The policy of “Dealing with Reality” being officially adopted in 1995 was a turning point and shift in the policies of Islax towards working with traditional institutions and civil society organisations. The policy was a result of the lack of philosophy within the Brotherhood tradition regarding the stateless society. “Dealing with Reality” was also a compromise that allowed members of the organisation to participate in local politics and within factions through reconciliation and participation in the clan-based local councils. An important feature was that the concept also required full pacifism from the members. It attracted criticism from members because clans, a concept generally viewed with contempt by most Islax members, were included as a political factor to be taken into account. Islax members were basically allowed to enter clan-based but non-violent associations in order to influence policies. The policy was only accepted after the practices of the prophet Mohamed in dealing with tribes in the Arab peninsula were studied, and following assurances from the Islax leadership that the doctrine was of a temporary nature.¹⁴⁹

The *Al-Igatha wa tacliim* pillar had deep historical roots but was reviewed in 1991, partly driven by the efforts of Ibrahim Dusuqi,¹⁵⁰ and a special health centre was subsequently started in Mogadishu led by him. Headquarters were later started behind what was at that time the “jewel” of Islax’s charities, the Arafat hospital, itself part of the ZamZam foundation.

Al Islax followed two distinct strategies when conducting development/humanitarian activities. The first strategy was a new and quite original strategy, since most international Brotherhoods shunned this type of organisation: in 1991 the Al Islax charity was

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 108.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Abdihraman Badio per e-mail, 7 April 2009.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Abdihraman Badio per e-mail, 7 April 2009.

established, a charity directly and publicly controlled by the Brotherhood. The second strategy was the old network-based approach, of charities created by members of Islax, which cooperated and coordinated with Islax and which Islax at times took credit for and at other times denied having links with. As time passed, the latter model was to develop while the former model was to almost die out.¹⁵¹ Throughout the 1990s, several prestigious projects were launched, most notably the ZamZam foundation (1992) and the Tadamun foundation (1992). Both Tadamun and ZamZam were kept separate from Al Islax, with their affiliation following the traditional network-based approach of most Brotherhood organisations throughout the world.¹⁵²

ZamZam was engaged in support for orphans and in the drilling of wells and mosque constructions. ZamZam started out by drawing on the support of Islamic organisations such as the Ajman, UAE and Human Welfare Committee of the Kingdom of Bahrain, but developed into a charity heavily supported by the United Nations.¹⁵³ Tadamun was a Puntland-based organisation, running activities to do with schools and water holes, and cooperating with Oxfam Novib.¹⁵⁴ By 1996 it had opened the 'TASS' tuberculosis (TB) control programme, situated mainly in Bosasso.

Another institution that initially had a stronger affiliation with Islax through its network connections was the Mogadishu University, established on 22 September 1997. The university was to achieve international acclaim, including gaining recognition for its economy degree in Sweden, an honour not granted to the pre-war Mogadishu University.¹⁵⁵ Many of the NGOs and charities

¹⁵¹ E-mail from Abduhraman Badio, dated 6 January 2008.

¹⁵² The first major project of ZamZam was the Osobe Clinique in Mogadishu which was started in 1993. ZamZam was increasingly active and began construction of the first building for Arafat Hospital at Mogadishu in 1997, assisted by the Islamic Development Bank at Jeddah. The hospital was inaugurated officially on 10 August 2001. The foundation constructed, furnished and managed seven formal education schools in five Somali regions. The total number of students in these schools for the new scholastic year 2004/2005 is approximately 6,149 boy and girl students while the staff, teachers and workers number more than 200. ZamZam also provided scholarships in universities for 63 students in the universities of Sudan, Pakistan, Malaysia and Yemen. Additionally ZamZam is engaged in supporting orphans, the drilling of wells and mosque constructions.

¹⁵³ Again according to the organisation, it supported 500 orphans, the excavation of 80 surface wells, the drilling of 11 deep wells, and the construction of five mosques in large towns and 25 in small villages; <http://www.zamzamsom.org/> (accessed 5 June 2009).

¹⁵⁴ The organisation claimed that it provided help to 8,049 students as well as sanitation, and that 50 fishing boats were also distributed after the tsunami in 2004. They also have human rights programmes, HIV/AIDS programmes, youth grants and community activation programmes. See http://www.tadamun.org/emergency_relief.html (accessed 5 June 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Professor Yahya Ibrahim, 3 May 2007.

following this semi-affiliated model were evaluated by outsiders, who tended to find their services very good given the Somali civil war situation. At university level there seems to be little trace of ideology apart from compulsory modules in Islam during the first year of studies. Female students have a high participation rate and Christian lecturers were, and are, employed. However, the network solution did and does mean that such institutions lose transparency, and ZamZam, Tadamun and Mogadishu University have all been restrictive in publishing their list of board members. The model did, however, enable Islax-affiliated charities to gain support from institutions usually hostile to Brotherhood organisations. By the end of the 1990s, Al Islax had discovered that external donors were reluctant to support the Al Islax charity, as Islax's Brotherhood status and negative gossip created scepticism from the United Nations and other international organisations. Thus, the charitable activities were in general moved away from the Islax charity and over to network-based models. The irony of this was that Islax in the 1990s was less political than it had been during the Barre years, with its main efforts now being focused on development and humanitarian projects and reconciliation, and it remained deeply pacifistic. What started out as a political movement had been turned more and more into a civil society organisation. Islax in fact had connections with other organisations such as the Somali Medical Association and Cogwo. The Brothers in Cairo, who saw development and reconciliation as a foundation for more political activities, agreed to Islax's strategy as Somalia was seen as not being ripe for political change.¹⁵⁶ To a certain extent this view was naive, as reconciliation can be political in itself, and by 1999 Al Islax engaged in the largest reconciliation effort ever handled by the organisation, the 1999-2000 Arta conference. This was the start of a tumultuous decade in which Islax was to become politicised again.

4.3 New rivals, new fractures, 1999-2009

The period 1990-1999 had been a period in which Islax became depoliticised, moving away from a political organisation towards a civil society organisation and expanding its charities and its peace

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Abdul Monem Abul Fotouh, Cairo, August 2008.

and reconciliation efforts. The next period would see a politicisation of Al Islax and its first large division. The development was driven forward by several processes. The first process was the weakening of the Somali warlords and the parallel strengthening of the Somali civil society and the business community. As described by Hansen, the warlords' factions were weak and unstable, unable to pay their militias over time, allowing for an increased fragmentation. Increased fragmentation subsequently opened the door to other actors: Islamist businessmen and civil society.¹⁵⁷ The second process was paradoxically that this development, combined with Al Islax's determination to start engaging in national reconciliation "as soon as the time was ripe", meant that Islax was to engage in national reconciliation. This move was highly ideological for Islax, which saw social reconciliation as a vehicle for societal acceptance of its ideology. The move was received with hostility by some regional powers who felt that their clients got too little in return from such conferences.

The last process was, also paradoxically, a revival of political Islam in Somalia partially due to the Sharia courts, which were local institutions providing some form of rudimentary justice and thus gaining local popularity. This led to the emergence of several strong Islamist organisations, potential rivals of Al Islax.¹⁵⁸

Al Islax decided to start national reconciliation work in 1998 due to a perceived weakening of the power of the warlords and a strengthening of the civil society. By 1999, the Islax delegation headed by Sheik Mohamed Garyare met with Mr. Abdullahi Yusuf, president of Puntland at that time, in Garowe, and with Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Igal, president of "Somaliland", in Hargeysa.¹⁵⁹ Despite these events, it was Al Islax's activities at the Arta peace conference that were to be the high point of the Al Islax peace and reconciliation activities but that were also to illustrate the problems such efforts created. The conference itself, known as the Somali National Peace Conference (SNPC), was officially suggested by Djibouti's President Omar Guehllle on the United Nations 54th

¹⁵⁷ Hansen, Stig Jarle, "Civil war economies, the hunt for profit and the incentives for peace", *Enemies or Allies* working paper 1 (2007), University of Bath/University of Mogadishu.

¹⁵⁸ Hansen, Stig Jarle, "The rise and fall of the Islamic courts" in Hansen, Mesoy and Karadas *The Borders of Islam*, Hurst/Colombia University Press, August 2009 (London/New York).

¹⁵⁹ Aburhaman Abdulahi Badio, "The Islah movement in Somalia", manuscript sent to the writer.

General Assembly on 23 September 1999. It was preceded by a Technical Consultative Somali Peace Process symposium as well as a Traditional Peace Symposium, the first supposedly to be steered by the civil society and the second to be based on the traditional Somali elders. The Technical Consultative Somali Peace Process symposium was to advise on technical issues, while the Traditional Peace Symposium was to advise on representation. Abduhraman Badio, later the press spokesman in Al Islax, participated in the former committee, and many other members of Al Islax were also active. Al Islax has been reluctant to admit publicly that it had an active role in the conference, but emphasises its successes in Arta on the web pages of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁶⁰ The actual importance of Islax's activities is hard to estimate but several observers believed that Islax was crucial in fundraising for the events.¹⁶¹ What remains quite certain was that Al Islax used its wide networks to facilitate the conference and also contributed to its funding. Their activity gained Al Islax considerable leverage, and an Al Islax member, Ibrahim Dusuq, became leader of the foreign relations committee in the new parliament. Islax estimated that 3 per cent of the representatives were Islax members, but also that their activities gained them sympathy amongst of a large number of delegates.¹⁶² What effect did this have on the political activities of Al Islax? The organisation itself partly claimed responsibility for the fact that the Djibouti constitution produced after the Arta conference was amongst the most Islamised constitutions in the history of Somalia. However, the Islamist victory may equally have been the result of other Islamist activists present at the conference, such as the Sharia courts and Al Itihad Al Islamiya.

The Djibouti conference caused Islax to emerge on the political radar of Ethiopia and the United States. The Djibouti conference was viewed with hostility by the Ethiopian government, which partly saw this as Djibouti taking the regional lead and partly saw

¹⁶⁰ El-Saeed, Ramadan "Interview Abduhraman Badio" 14 August 2006, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com> (accessed 30 May 2009).

¹⁶¹ See Bryden, Matt, "No Quick Fixes: Coming to Terms with Terrorism, Islam, and Statelessness in Somalia", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 2003); Marchal, Roland, 'Islamic political dynamics in the Somali civil war', paper presented at the conference on 'Islam in Africa: A Global, Cultural and Historical Perspective', Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Birmingham University (April 2002).

¹⁶² Le Sage, Andrew (2004), "Somalia and the War on Terrorism: Political Islamic Movements & US Counter-Terrorism Efforts", PhD thesis, Cambridge, Jesus College, 172.

the conference as being too accommodating to Al Itthad Al Islamiya members. Al Islax was criticised by Ethiopia for having connections with Al Qaeda and for being part of Al Itthad Al Islamiya.¹⁶³ While there was no evidence whatsoever of the former allegation, the latter was understandable but false. The fact that several Itthad members, such as Ali Warsame, had been Islax members, together with the fact that Islax maintained its clandestineness – which was to a certain degree necessary in civil-war-torn Somalia – and the organisation’s network connections with Al Itthad members, made this an easy mistake to make. However, in order to make such a claim, the rivalry between the two organisations, and the hostility and death threats from the latter towards the former, had to be ignored.

Al Islax was in a way forced onto the defensive by the “War on Terror” discourse. Ethiopian rhetoric implicated them in global terrorist networks, and Western powers lacked accurate knowledge of Somalia and trusted the Ethiopian information. Al Islax was often confused with other Islamist organisations, and their clandestine structure made them an easier target.

Djibouti showed the weakness of the peace engagement abilities of Al Islax although it did play a crucial role. Islax probably contributed to the broadening of the participation in Somali peace conferences, as the Arta was the first peace conference in Somalia with abroad and strong civil society participation. However, the result of the conference was the weak and feeble Transitional National Government of Somalia (TNG). The TNG failed to co-opt a majority of the warlords who still had the power to cause disruption within Somalia. Ethiopia was also alienated and had the power to act negatively. In the end even Al Islax became sceptical about the TNG, seeing it as failing to pay attention to Islax’s views and being unable to take control of Somalia.

Islax had paid a price for its engagement: it had become political again, more or less against its own will. The attention drawn towards it because of the conference had ensured that. A new peace process, the Mbagathi/Nairobi process (2002-2005), included the warlords and appeased Ethiopia. However, Al Islax

¹⁶³ Medane Tadesse, *Al Itthihad Al Islamiya, Political Islam and the Black Economy in Somalia* (Addis Ababa: MT, 2003).

kept a lower profile in the conference and only entered fully, but clandestinely, by 2004.

Al Islax also faced an increasing internal strain between what many saw, not entirely correctly, as an Eastern and a Western group. Western Diaspora-based Islax members were viewed with increasing suspicion by many Somali-educated Islax members. Western-based Islax members, such as Abduhraman Badio, had a considerable influence on Western donors and money was flowing into Islax. More conservative elements, such as Sheik Nur Gurhan Barud, increasingly viewed the activities of the most active fundraisers with suspicion.¹⁶⁴ It was not the fundraising itself that was the problem, but rather the perceived willingness to compromise on the issue of Sharia in discussions with Western powers and the failure to see the Islamic state as an end state.¹⁶⁵

Muhammad Ali Ibrahim and Islax members such as Omar Idiris and Nur Barud had increasingly viewed the more passive style of Al Islax with impatience, preferring more political action. Al Islax moved to exclude their former leader Muhammad Ali Ibrahim (who was leader until 1999 when he was replaced by Ali Sheik) but only made this public after he appeared as a leader for the Sharia courts delegation during the Khartoum negotiations in 2006.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, the rise of the Sharia courts brought the conflict within Al Islax to the forefront. While Islax initially supported the achievements of the courts in Mogadishu, the main group of Al Islax focused on pacifistic means while the courts used violence in their expansion.¹⁶⁷ When Al Islax wanted to create a mediation committee between the TFG and the courts, the union of Islamic courts rejected the offer. The Sharia courts also forbade Al Islax to celebrate its jubilee in 2006. Furthermore, while Islax condemned the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006, emphasising pacifism and the need for reconciliation, the more radical Islax members wanted to go further and to sanction insurgency against the Ethiopian forces. Central Islax officials remained positive towards the TFG even after the Ethiopian intervention, although they wanted Arabic peacekeepers, while oppositional Islax members

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Sheik Nur Barud Gurhan, Nairobi, 3 April 2009.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Al Islax web (2006) “يلاموصلوا عضولوا على ع ذريخال اتادجتسمال لوح يفحص نايب،” http://www.islaax.org/arabic/index_ar.htm accessed 9 December 2009.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

supported the insurgency. It is interesting to note that the central Brotherhood in Egypt condemned the Ethiopian intervention and sanctioned insurgency. The leadership in Somalia was thus on a collision course with the “older brother”, the ideologically-powerful Egyptian Brotherhood.

The conflict within the Somali Islax came to head in January 2008, when the opposition force within the movement tried to hijack the organisation by appointing Osman Ahmed Ibrahim as the head of the organisation without voting in the Shura, at the same time sending a notification to the Egyptian Brotherhood. However, the procedure – which was more or less an attempted coup – was a mistake as the Brothers of Egypt and most international Brotherhoods reacted negatively due to the way in which the Islax opposition had omitted the formal voting procedure. In one of the strongest moves by the Egyptian Brotherhood in relation to other Brotherhoods, Supreme Counsellor Akef declared the appointment void, and basically stated that the old Islax leadership was still in power. The opposition was defined as a non-Brotherhood.¹⁶⁸

This did not mean that the break-up was without its problems for Islax, as many of their previously more powerful leaders had left. The result of the new Djibouti Peace Conference (2008) and the rise of Al Shebab made things even worse. The Djibouti conference led to the inclusion of the Sharia court structures loyal to Sheik Sherif (the Sharia courts had by then split into two groups) in a cabinet with the old TFG, which again was the end result of the Mbagathi/Nairobi process (2002-2005). This meant that members who had formerly opposed Islax and who now supported Sheik Sherif's part of the old court movement entered the cabinet. For example, Sheik Ali Ibrahim became the head of social welfare. Moreover, the former members of the movement became crucial in new legislation to make Sharia the basis for Somali legislation, which previously had been an aim of Al Islax. The rise of the radical Al Qaeda-oriented Harakat Al Shebab dealt an even more severe blow to the organisation. The Wahhabi jihadist ideology of the radical Shebab group was alien to the

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Abdul Monem Abul, 6 August 2008; interview with Ibrahim Hudaiby, 13 August 2008. It may have been because the opposition more or less tried to hijack the Egyptian Ikhwan website, sending a false message to the web journalists which led to a false news message being issued by the Egyptian Brotherhood's own journalists.

Ikhwan philosophy, and the two organisations were at odds with each other – to the extent that Al Islax failed to operate in Shebab-controlled areas. Islax charities became increasingly constrained to the few areas where the new government was in control and to the more peaceful Somaliland and Puntland regions.

4.4 Charities, peace and reconciliation

Islax charities in general are fairly successful and fairly moderate. Partners as well as local authorities are usually highly satisfied with their work. Moreover, Islax has managed to operate its charities in very difficult circumstances, for example keeping Mogadishu University open through some of the heaviest fighting in the history of Mogadishu, while at the same time addressing the security of its benefactors. They have developed techniques to enable them to operate in a very difficult environment, such as moving the sites of their charities and holding local negotiations.

The charities of Islax have probably contributed to the so-called Arabisation of Somalia, by using Arabic as a major language of instruction. However, this is a general trend and cannot be blamed on Islax alone. Islax supports gender-focused organisations and encourages education for females. There is little sign of their ideological agenda in their curriculums and their other charitable efforts. Their ideology nevertheless influences their efforts through the organisation's hostility towards the radical Harakat Al Shebab, and Islax's charities in general cannot operate in Shebab-held territory. However, Islax has become a clear candidate for partnership for Western organisations wanting to create development in non-Shebab-controlled areas of Somalia.

The way in which Islax has handled its relations with Western donors is admired by fellow Brothers in the Middle East; indeed it has a very good relationship with various Brotherhoods including the Kuwaiti, the Sudanese and the Egyptian Brothers.

Islax's clandestine nature still alienates other Somalis. The lack of transparency – partly a product of Brotherhood traditions and partly a product of a genuine fear of hardship in the Somali civil war setting – has given rise to rumours that are harmful to Islax.

Islax's track record on peacemaking is poor. The organisation had some success in local settings in the mid 1990s, but its involvement at national level politicised Islax. The organisation became vulnerable, leading to a detraction of its charitable organisations. Surprisingly, the growth of alternative Islamist movements in Somalia also hurt Islax. The Brotherhood philosophical foundation was very different from the jihadi Wahhabists in Shebab and the more clan-based Islamists in the court movement. Rather than religion being the glue of society that Islax believed it was, it became a source of division.

Today it is easy to view Al Islax as a spent force, as it is surrounded by enemies (Shebab) and a reluctant transitional government with a cabinet in which several ministers are hostile to it. Islax has responded by moving its focus more to the non-government, non-Shebab-controlled areas, becoming more active in Puntland and Somaliland. Its activities have also grown outside Somalia, in the West. Islax remains efficient in handling charitable work, which enables it to draw upon financial support from Western governments and NGOs. Its leaders are still highly regarded by fellow Brothers and have excellent connections with the international Brotherhood. Moreover, Islax is important in the various professional associations.

While Islax is of limited value as a peace and reconciliation partner at national level, its efficiency as a charity and its relatively stable organisational structure means that it is a key player in charitable efforts and will be an important element in future Somali politics. Islax may also be a good partner for any local peace negotiation efforts. The stability of Islax, as well as its support from international Brotherhoods, makes it a force to be reckoned with well into the future and a credible partner despite its current weak state. Its charities are efficient, and its policies of pacifism almost unique in a Somali setting. Islax should not be underestimated and should be engaged for partnerships in development project by western donors.

5 The Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan, ruins of its former glory?

5.1 The Turabi legacy

The Brotherhood in Sudan is often equated with Hassan Turabi and his political group/party, the National Islamic Front (NIF). However, for the two last decades Hassan Turabi has been locked in a struggle with the international Brotherhood. Although Turabi brought the Brotherhood in Sudan to the highest position of political power in the country, he also managed to fall out of favour with the leaders of the international Muslim Brotherhood. A new Sudanese Brotherhood, accepted by Egypt, grew up in the shadows of Turabi.

The history of the Sudanese Brotherhood movement began in the 1940s. In 1945, Hasan al-Banna dispatched a Brotherhood delegation from Egypt to present the Brotherhood movement to the Sudanese. The local Brotherhoods associated in several loose groups, such as the League of Sudanese Students (LSS) and the Hantoub secondary school where Babiker Karrar and Muhammad Yousuf Muhammad lectured and recruited new adherents to the Brotherhood ideology. However, it was not until August 1952 that the predecessor of the Brotherhood, the Islamic Liberation Movement, was founded. In 1954, the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoon, the Sudanese brotherhood, became formally founded.¹⁶⁹ It drew its members from several older groups including the group in Omdurman, a group of students in the previously-mentioned

¹⁶⁹ Interview of Ali Gawish, PR Officer and member of the Executive Council, 20 July 2009.

Hantoub Secondary school, a group at the Gordon College which later became the University of Khartoum, and a group of students studying in Egypt.¹⁷⁰ Many of the members also came from the Khatamiyya, a traditional Sufi sect.¹⁷¹ Sheik Umar al-Imam became the first leader but was later replaced by Ali Talib-Allah. Talib-Allah was directly appointed by Hasan al-Banna, the international leader and founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁷² To begin with, the literature the new organisation used was the same as that which the Brotherhood used in Cairo, which created some discontent within the Sudanese Brotherhood who viewed Egyptian control over the Sudanese Brothers as being too tight.¹⁷³

The organisation was initially elite based.¹⁷⁴ It called for a socialist Islamic state.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, the group defined itself as an educational movement, calling for complete Islamic reform.¹⁷⁶ When the Brotherhood was founded, Sudan was in political turmoil as the country had a condominium government, with both the United Kingdom and Egypt trying to influence the governance of Sudan. Many people, especially young university students and including the Brothers, increasingly viewed Islam as the solution to Sudan's problems and also wanted an independent Sudan. The Brotherhood was also campaigning for a constitution and a society based on Islam.¹⁷⁷

In 1952, the Sudanese Brothers also decided to form a political party, which created disagreement. Baibikir Karrar, now one of the leaders of the Brothers, was against the idea and therefore started his own group.¹⁷⁸ Despite this fragmentation, the Brothers took the process further by taking the initiative in 1955 to the Islamic Front for the Constitution (IFC) an organisation formed on the model of a national front. This relationship did not last long as in

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Sulami, Fahm, Mishal, *The West and Islam-Western liberal democracy versus the system of Shura*, London, Routledge, 2003: 66.

¹⁷³ Esposito, John L., Voll John O., *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press 1996): 92.

¹⁷⁴ Interview of Ali Gawish, PR Officer and member of the Executive Council, Sudan, 20 July 2009.

¹⁷⁵ El-Affendi, Abelwahab, *Turabi's Revolution-Islam and Power in Sudan* (London: Grey Seal Books 1991): 48.

¹⁷⁶ Sulami, Fahm, Mishal, *The West and Islam-Western liberal democracy versus the system of Shura* (London, Routledge, 2003): 67.

¹⁷⁷ Interview, Mohamed Ali Saeed, journalist in AFP, Khartoum, 19 July 2009.

¹⁷⁸ El-Affendi, Abelwahab, *Turabi's Revolution-Islam and Power in Sudan* (London: Grey Seal Books 1991): 52.

1958 a disagreement over the strategy for the election between parts of the IFC and the Brotherhood led to the disintegration of the IFC. However, it demonstrated an increasing pragmatism amongst the Brothers.¹⁷⁹ The Brotherhood also played a central role in the downfall of the Abboud military regime in the October Revolution in 1964.¹⁸⁰ Together with other parties, such as the Umma Party, the Brotherhood was part of a coalition that ousted the president. The Brotherhood gained considerable power, gaining five representatives and one minister in the parliament.¹⁸¹ Following the downfall of the Abboud government, the Brotherhood fought for democracy and for the introduction of a civilian government. Hassan Turabi, who had joined the movement in 1951, was at the centre of events, attempting to modernise the movement, to politicise Islam and to promote independence from the Egyptian Brotherhood and their ideology. Turabi's goal was to create a strong multi-party front that would be able to make a political and ideological difference. Through the ICF the Brotherhood was able to obtain support from other political parties and promoted Islam as a foundation for the Sudanese constitution.¹⁸² The Brotherhood also managed to get an official ban on the Sudan Communist Party, which was viewed as secularists and thus as enemies.¹⁸³

However, Turabi was controversial amongst the Brothers and an opposition was formed within the Brotherhood movement.¹⁸⁴ The anti-Turabists became known as the "educationalist school" while the pro-Turabi group became known as the "political school". The former was a conservative group in favour of a purist approach with education and *Da'wa* (calling to Islam) and the latter was political, pragmatic and followed the modernist line of Turabi. In the Brotherhood's General Congress in 1969, the educationalist school headed by Muhammed Saleh Omar, Gaafar Idris and Sadiq Abdallah (the anti-Turabi group) presented an alternative candidate for leader, Sadiq Abdallah Abdal-Majid. However,

¹⁷⁹ Esposito, John, L., Voll John O., *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press 1996): 88.

¹⁸⁰ Esposito, John, L., Voll, John O., *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001: 123.

¹⁸¹ Interview of Ali Gawish, Khartoum, 20 July 2009.

¹⁸² Esposito, John, L., Voll, John O., *Islam and Democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press 1996: 90.

¹⁸³ Al-Effendi, 81.

¹⁸⁴ Sulami, Fahm, Mishal, *The West and Islam-Western liberal democracy versus the system of Shura*, London, Routledge, 2003: 69.

Abdallah did not want to create disunity and therefore in the end withdrew his candidacy. Following long discussions centered on the Brotherhood's profile and strategy, the anti-Turabi group lost.¹⁸⁵ It was during this year 1969, that the anti-Turabi group – the present-day Brotherhood (15-20 people at the time) – left, following many ruthless power struggles with Turabi.¹⁸⁶ One of the contentious issues was joining the Nimeiri government which came into power in 1969, since many of the Brotherhood members did not want to enter into politics.¹⁸⁷ At the time the group was small and rather insignificant but it contained many of the present leaders of the Brotherhood.

The Egyptian Brotherhood continued supporting Turabi, mainly because of the latter's successes. Due to Turabi's flexibility, charisma, clear goals, political skills and strong dedication, the Brotherhood went from being a small pressure group to becoming a political party. The organisation turned out to be brilliant at agitating and at using propaganda and deception to achieve their political goals.¹⁸⁸ They learnt their counter-strategies from monitoring the other parties, one example being the Communist party.¹⁸⁹ However, opposition continued to grow within the Sudanese Brotherhood. Due to issues such as disagreements over gender rights and the relationship with Nimeiri, a new group split from Turabi (1977-1979) and joined the original Brotherhood dissidents.¹⁹⁰ Turabi supported Nimeiri when Nimeiri called for reconciliation. Turabi also tried to take a different path than the original Brotherhood path, as he wanted to lead the Brotherhood members away from any influence from Cairo and to lead them according to his vision, a vision which omitted Qutb's and Al-Banna's strong focus on stepwise education in order to create the Islamic society.¹⁹¹

Turabi and his group joined Nimeiri from 1979, which secured many of the Brotherhood members government and security positions and meant that the Brotherhood benefited financially

¹⁸⁵ Appleby, R. Scott, *Spokesman for the Despised* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press), 1997: 190.

¹⁸⁶ Interview of Ali Gawish, Khartoum, 20 July 2009.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ahmed. M. Abdel Ghaffar, "One Against All: The National Islamic Front (NIF) and Sudanese Sectarian and Secular Parties", CMI, Christian Michelsen Institut, 2008: 6, 9.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

through clever manoeuvring of the country's Islamic economy. The "Islamic banks" were to a certain degree exempt from government control, and Brotherhood members were given superior benefits such as issuing loans that benefitted the movement.¹⁹² Sudan and many Sudanese experienced a period of growth and mobility and, due to the economic and educational possibilities, a middle class developed. For Nimeiri the Brotherhood was the Islamist group that could provide him with legitimacy and support for his change to a political system founded on Islamic principles.¹⁹³ The Brotherhood as a whole grew and gained increasing support from other parties, but the price they paid was that they had to tone down their demand for a more conservative Islamic society with preaching and education as central issues.¹⁹⁴ With the help of Turabi, Nimeiri went as far as declaring Sharia laws in 1983. Thus, a major goal for the Brotherhood was achieved.¹⁹⁵

However, the relationship between the international Brotherhood movement and Turabi was deteriorating; the Egyptian Brotherhood for example were getting more and more dissatisfied with what they saw as Turabi's ideological blasphemy and his attempts to organise Brotherhoods internationally. Ideologically, Turabi was in favour of interpreting the Quran and Hadiths from a more modern point of departure. This position was strongly opposed by the anti-Turabi group to which Hadiths were more or less conclusive. According to Turabi, the Brotherhood was too dependent on the Brotherhood in Cairo. Another Brotherhood leader gave the reason for the split with Turabi as being due to administrative and regulatory weakness.¹⁹⁶

Eventually the Turabi group stopped using the name "The Muslim Brotherhood".¹⁹⁷ Even if Turabi did have a modern approach to many issues such as gender, he represented a radical line and increasingly became a pan-Islamist leader with a highly critical approach to the West and a positive approach to global jihad.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² Collins, O. Robert, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008): 149.

¹⁹³ El-Affendi, Abdelwahab, *Turabi's Revolution-Islam and Power in Sudan*, London: Grey Seal Books 1991: 86.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 80.

¹⁹⁵ Collins, 2008, 146.

¹⁹⁶ MB leader, Ayyad Alblah interview, *al Moslim net*, <http://almoslim.net/node/92171>.

¹⁹⁷ Conversation with Abdelwahab El-Affendi, 15 September 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Collins, 194-5.

From 1980, the international Brotherhood designated another group as the Sudanese Brotherhood.

5.2 The new Brothers

The new Brotherhood is a relatively small political/religious organisation/society with between 500 and 1,000 members.¹⁹⁹ It is today represented in the parliament with 12 out of 500 parliamentarians and with one minister in the cabinet, the Minister of State for Social Affairs, Sami Yassin Abd Al-Dayem.²⁰⁰ As recently as 2000 the group decided to enter Sudanese party politics and the new Brotherhood participated in the 2000 national elections.²⁰¹ The two top leaders of the new Muslim Brotherhood are Dr. Hibr Yusuf-Youssef Nour Al-Dayem (Secretary-General of the Brotherhood in Sudan) and Sadiq Abdallah (Inspector General of the Brotherhood in Sudan, leader from 1980-2008). Hibr was the new leader, the Secretary-General, of the Muslim Brotherhood from 2008.²⁰²

Abdallah, who held the highest position in the Brotherhood from 1980 to 2008, may be viewed as relatively conservative.²⁰³ He is a prominent Islamic leader and has also written in Sudanese newspapers as a columnist, while Hibr has lectured at the University of Khartoum for three decades. Hibr has also had his own TV programme in which he has practiced Tafsir, i.e. guiding the Sudanese people in what the Quran and the Sunnah prescribe.²⁰⁴ In addition to the post of leader for the Brotherhood in Sudan, he is Chairman of the Education Committee in the Sudanese Parliament.²⁰⁵ The new Brotherhood group has a central office in Khartoum and, importantly, their own website.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Ali Gawish and El-Affendi, Khartoum, 13 March 2009.

²⁰⁰ Staff writer, Interview with the Head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan, Nour al-Dayem, Ikhwanonline, <http://www.ikhwan.tv/Article.asp?ID=17403&SectionID=87>.

²⁰¹ Staff writer, "Sudanese Muslim Brothers to take part in the parliamentary elections", *Arabic News.com*, 18 November 2000, <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/001118/2000111802.html> accessed 18 August 2009.

²⁰² Interview with Press Officer, Ali Gawish Khartoum, 15 June 2009.

²⁰³ Staff writer, "Al Jazeera Interview with Muslim Brotherhood Leader", transcript of interview with Sadiq Abdallah, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP168507>.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Dr. Abddel Ati, Khartoum, 17 June 2009.

²⁰⁵ Staff writer, Interview with the Head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan, Nour al-Dayem, Ikhwanonline, <http://www.ikhwan.tv/Article.asp?ID=17403&SectionID=87>.

²⁰⁶ <http://www.ikhwansd.com>.

The new Brotherhood was more influenced by Sayyid Qutb than Turabi's Brotherhood.²⁰⁷ However, it should be noted that the new Brotherhood is not in favour of "Takfir" (the ex-communication of non-correctly-believing Muslims) and do not follow Qutb's last script and book "Milestones", a book that has been used by many jihadists as a manifest for holy armed global resistance and as a legitimisation for jihad.²⁰⁸ The new Brotherhood was also a much more elitist group and wanted to maintain a certain distance from society.²⁰⁹ The Abdallah group did not support Turabi's pragmatic line and focused much more on education and a stepwise approach to education and power.²¹⁰ They thus have a strong focus on education and the stepwise approach to influence society according to Islamic principles, following the more general Brotherhood *fikra*.

Another source of ideological disagreement between Turabi and the Abdallah group was with regards to gender and women's role in society.²¹¹ Turabi favoured a more modern approach giving woman increased equality in society such as being open to women in business and political positions, compared to the Abdallah group that has a more conservative view on the gender issue.²¹²

The present-day website of the Brotherhood gives an idea of their image and their ideology.²¹³ There is a picture that alternates between a dead child, the Hamas logo and a Hamas fighter. Under one of the headings, "About us", the Palestinian suffering in 1948 is emphasised as a major issue for the Brotherhood movement, where they criticise many Arab regimes for being puppets of the West.²¹⁴ Under one of the sub-headings, "Activities and Assets", it was written "Office of the Muslim Brotherhood Advocacy" and a meeting was announced in support of the Gaza and Palestinian cause. Darfur as an issue was presented together with "The Issue of Religion and the World".

²⁰⁷ Interview with Mohamed Ali Saeed, journalist in AFP, Khartoum, 18 June 2009.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ El-Affendi, 87.

²¹⁰ Officer for the Muslim Brotherhood of Sudan, Ali Gawish in Khartoum, 15 June 2009.

²¹¹ Interview with Ali Gawish Ibid.

²¹² El-Affendi, Abelwahab, *Turabi's Revolution-Islam and Power in Sudan*, London: Grey Seal Books 1991: 97.

²¹³ <http://www.ikhwansd.com>.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

The new Brotherhood group has close connections with the international Brotherhood in Cairo and consults them on various occasions although the Brotherhood in Cairo never intervenes.²¹⁵ They also have a friendly and relatively close relationship with the Somali Brothers. The Sudanese Brotherhood is one of the 16 countries in the International Shura Council of the Brotherhood.²¹⁶

5.3 The Brothers and charity

Charitable work is of great importance for all Brotherhood members since it is one of the basic principles of being a Muslim and a member of the Brotherhood. Charity work may also be used as a political and religious tool, and there are many examples that charitable organisations have been used to achieve political or religious goals.²¹⁷ The new Brotherhood does not seem to directly own any charities or development organisations but, like most Brotherhoods, it dominates on several boards of various charities and at times takes credit for their activities.

There are several very important historical organisations that the Brotherhood has lost control of due to this network-based approach. One of Sudan's largest charitable and development organisations, Munazzamat Da'Wa Islamiyah (MDI), began in 1980 and was strongly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood.²¹⁸ It was started from Libya, but the Brotherhood only seems to have played a central role in the process once the organisation was later moved to Khartoum. Both Turabi and Abdallah were on the board of directors, and the Brotherhood practised the old Brotherhood approach to charities, i.e. striving to control a simple majority on the board rather than directly intergarting it to the brotherhood organization it-self.²¹⁹ However, this large charitable organisation drifted over to Turabi. Turabi successfully turned one of the Brotherhood members on the board, perhaps illustrating a general weakness in the Brotherhood's organisational form, since the

²¹⁵ Staff writer, Ayyad Alblah, Member of the Executive Council, interviewed on al-moslim.net.

²¹⁶ Interview, Ali Gawish Khartoum, 15 June 2009.

²¹⁷ Benthall, Jonathan, Belloin-Jourdan, *The Charitable Crescent-Politics of Aid in the Muslim World*, London, I.B. Tauris: 2009, 73.

²¹⁸ Interview with Muslim Brotherhood members Hamid and Abelazis, Khartoum, 19 July 2009.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

brothers in general follows the network model that enabled this takeover.²²⁰

The new Muslim Brotherhood has a strong influence in some charitable and development organisations. The organisations are: *The Future Youth Care Organisation*, *The El-Rahama Association*, *The Islamic Women's Organisation*, *Mercy*, *The Rahama Charitable Organisation*, *Islamic Relief*, *The Turath Organisation for Human Development* and *The Islamic Medical Organisation*.²²¹ The largest of these organisations, *Islamic Relief*, was founded in the UK in 1985. In 1991 the Brotherhood in the UK contacted the Brotherhood in Sudan in order to arrange the establishment of a Sudanese office.²²² It is one of the largest international Muslim NGOs, and in Sudan the organisation specialises in child welfare programmes, water/sanitation and health. They have branch offices in many parts of the country and are one of the few NGOs with their own drilling rigs.²²³ According to critics, *Islamic Relief* aims to spread Islam in the South.²²⁴ *Islamic Relief* supports poor families and encourages them to become Muslims.²²⁵ However, the Brotherhood has ceased its cooperation with *Islamic Relief*.²²⁶ *The El-Rahama Association* is a charity that focuses on women helping orphan families with loans and training. The organisation also works to prevent female mutilation. *The Future Youth Care Organisation* (FYCO) was established in 2004 and is based on Muslim Brotherhood values. *Da'wa* is a foundation and the key tool: "We cannot separate *Da'wa* from our work. This is due to many reasons: Islam is based on *Da'wa* and it is one of the tools to disseminate values of Islam." *Da'wa* covers different fields such as development, reconciliation, ethics and values, and there is no separation between economic and humanitarian principles since both derive legitimacy from the Islamic sources of law, i.e. Sharia.

The FYCO works in the sector of undergraduates, graduates and youth, and their goals are building capacity, facilitating youth housing, focusing on environmental issues and raising awareness

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Interviews with Ali Gawish, Hamid, Abdel Aziz and other members of the MB.

²²² Staff writer, "Islamic Relief Organizations in Great Britain" *Mondiaal Nieuws*, [http://www.mo.be/index.php?id=63&tx_uwnews_pi2\[art_id\]=22042&cHash=2149696f34](http://www.mo.be/index.php?id=63&tx_uwnews_pi2[art_id]=22042&cHash=2149696f34).

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Interview, Mohamed Ali Saeed, journalist in AFP Khartoum, 14 June 2009.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Interview, Omer Al-Hibir and Dr. Al-Hibir, Khartoum, 10 September 2009.

about issues such as drugs and HIV. In addition, the FYCO publicly aims to build trust between the south and the north. The tools the FYCO uses are workshops, seminars and camping. Men and women work together, for example in workshops but not in management. The FYCO have schools and centres for culture in two cities: Wov and Malkal. They also cooperate with the MDI in southern Sudan and with the *Islamic Relief Agency*. *The Islamic Women Organisation* focuses on women's issues, awareness and charity work. It organises activities at the universities.²²⁷ *The Turath Organisation for Human Development* is a humanitarian organisation that is funded from a trust in Malaysia called Sham Al-Nour, of which the former Sudanese president and general Abd Al Rahman Muhammad Siwar al-Dahab is the general manager. The organisation specialises in development, *Da'wa* and political work such as peacebuilding. The organisation arranges training courses advancing humanistic ideas and building peace and unity.

Turath has trained 1,750 leaders from southern Sudan, the Nuba mountains and the Blue Nile district. *Turath* has also distributed 250 million copies of the Quran to people in villages in Africa and Asia. Other areas *Turath* has been working in are within agriculture in the Upper Nile district and offering computer classes for teachers in Malkal, and it has a special programme for attractive unity in cooperation with the government. This is the only one of the local charitable organisation that practises politics.²²⁸

The Brotherhood has received money from the Gulf countries. However, the Turabi group stopped receiving financial support after they supported Iraq in the Kuwait/Iraq war, while the Abdallah group continued to receive money.

5.4 Partners in peace and development?

When evaluating the role of the Brotherhood in Sudan, it is important to understand the difference between Turabi's group and the new Brothers. Turabi's pragmatist and political views inspired by the West were in strong contrast to the more scripturalist, pious *Da'wa*, withdrawn and inspired view of the

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ <http://www.turath.cc>.

Abdallah Brotherhood group. The latter Brotherhood organisation is founded on Islam and social/political national conditions and is therefore constantly changing. There seems to be a change taking place in which the elitist image is being left behind, the younger generation is taking over and the purist perspective is being softened.

By taking care of orphans and supporting education, the Brotherhood has been able to affect the beneficiaries' view of the Brotherhood. Nonetheless, although the Brotherhood, both the new Brotherhood and the Turabi group, have had ideological and political reasons for their focus and work with charities, they have helped a large part of Sudan's poor population with aid, charity and development work, although this is difficult to measure. What separates the Brotherhood charities from many Western humanitarian organisations is the way they focus on spreading their religious belief, Islam, through their charity. Voluntary work is one of the deeds a Muslim can and should commit to, therefore the charitable work the Brotherhood is supporting and committing to can be seen as "duty ethics". The consequences of their charity work are wide – poor and disabled people all over Sudan are being helped, modern computer classes are being formed, local leaders are being trained for business administration. At the same time the charitable work is closely connected to spreading the word of Islam and to supporting Islamic values. The question then remains: what are the consequences for Sudanese society; do they bring development, reconciliation or conflict?

It seems the answer to this is that the new Brotherhood is part of a national and international context and is therefore adapting. Although the Brotherhood in Sudan was a revolutionary group, this seems to have changed and the Turabi approach has been left behind. The Brotherhood is restructuring and although their political programme will have a conservative approach, their elitist and purist attitude is being weakened, and the older generation is being increasingly replaced by a younger one with newer and less conservative views. These elements will most likely contribute to development and consolation and to less conflict. This development should not cause naivety amongst Western donors – the current Sudanese Brotherhood has supported repressive

politics in Darfur and has a clearly aggressive policy on the Christian south.²²⁹

The Sudanese Brotherhood is a relatively small but growing Islamic/political organisation focusing on education and the stepwise approach, in which the foundation of their work is respect for Allah and his creation.²³⁰ Its small size and politicised nature mean that it will be of limited value as a facilitator of peace; and focus should be placed on its charities in order to achieve stronger results. It remains influential and should be engaged to encourage both moderation and good charitable projects. It should nevertheless be engaged in a way that takes its ideology into consideration and that limits the influence of the more conservative parts of this ideology and their support for repressive politics in Darfur.

²²⁹ See for example Al Jazeera; "Al-Jazeera Interviews - Muslim Brotherhood Leader in Sudan". http://www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD168507, accessed 10 December 2009.

²³⁰ Interview of Omer Al-Hibir and Dr. Al-Hibir Khartoum, 10 September 2009.

6 “Step- Brothers” in Ethiopia and Eritrea

The project found that “step-Brother” organisations were only partly accepted by their peers. The common denominator of these step-Brothers was that they operated in countries traditionally dominated by Christians, as Eritrea and Ethiopia. Other Brothers regarded them as being related to the larger brotherhood movement, but this was not unanimous as in some instances they were too small to be noticed by other Brothers and in other instances they adhered to ideological elements alien to the Brotherhood *fikra*.

The now-defunct Tadamun was a small organisation based on the Somali Ogadeeni clan within the borders of Ethiopia, and was in fact the closest Ethiopia ever had to a Brotherhood organisation. However, it was based on ethnic Somalis and was much more clan-based than its larger sister organisation within the internationally-recognised borders of Somalia, Islax. Tadamun was accepted by Islax as a proper Brotherhood organisation, but no other Brotherhoods interviewed for this report had even heard of it. It was neglected by the Egyptians, the Sudanese and the Yemenis – it was simply too small. Harsh Ethiopian reprisals against Somali-based political organisations in Ethiopia made its survival extremely hard while clan-based recruitment constrained its potential for expansion. It simply failed to recruit outside a specific Somali clan, leaving a very limited potential for recruitment and illustrating how clan considerations can influence Islamism, even in its Brotherhood version.

The Eritrean Islamic Party for Justice and Development (al Hesb al-Islami al-Eritree LilAdalah Wetenmiya), better known as Al Khalas, was also regarded by both the Somali and Egyptian

Brotherhoods as a “form” of ikwhan. However, what Somalis viewed as a Wahhabi element, together with the organisation’s use of violence, were seen to make them unsuitable as members of the international Brotherhood movement.²³¹ The Al Hezb was originally part of the now-infamous but defunct Eritrean Islamic jihad, an organisation with proven Al Qaeda ties but so fragmented that it is doubtful that all elements within it knew about these ties. Al Hezb itself claims that it is the closest that can be got to the Muslim Brotherhood in Eritrea but that they never could become a proper Brotherhood.²³² The fact that they could never develop as a Brotherhood was caused by the path of armed resistance chosen by the leadership and by the fact that they still had Wahhabi elements within their ranks.²³³

The above examples underline the difficulty of organising a Brotherhood in a predominantly Christian/ traditionally Christian dominated and non-Western country. The Brotherhoods were viewed with suspicion by the Kenyan, Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities.²³⁴ They were seen as spearheads for radical Islam and as political contenders. The first is probably untrue, and the latter is probably correct.

²³¹ Interview with Abdihraman Badio per e-mail, 7 April 2009.

²³² Interview with Amhed Sali and Muhammed Safer, 6 June 2009.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Interview with anonymous member of Kenya’s Secret Police, 5 January 2009.

7 Conclusions

7.1 The beliefs of the Brotherhood

The Brotherhoods have their own ideological agenda in which the implementation of Sharia is a major goal, proven by the rhetoric of all the Brothers studied in this report. They have failed to distance themselves from *hudud* punishment and repressive policies in Darfur, and they contain radical elements. A Brotherhood, or a Brotherhood NGO, should never be mistaken for being a purely civil society organisation – it is political. If it appears to be apolitical, this may be because of a dialectic view included in the *fikra*, i.e. that society is not yet ready for political activism.

However, the Brotherhoods have to be seen in their social context. The Brothers have a more open attitude towards the dynamics within Sharia and its interpretation than other Islamist organisations in the wider Horn of Africa. It seems that international engagement in their support moderates them even more.

7.2 Organisation and coordination

The standard model of a Brotherhood NGO is a model where individual Brothers sit on the board and control a charitable NGO. This type of organisational model is not without its problems: it is vulnerable to being taken over, as illustrated by Turabi's hijacking of a Sudanese NGO, and its transparency is limited. However, it is the repressive conditions facing the Brotherhoods which limit their ability to increase their transparency; in fact this type of organisation might be needed in order for the Brotherhood to survive in its surroundings. Partners should work to change this

situation, to allow the Brothers to come into the open regarding their charities without fear.

The Brothers act together across borders. A common model, often in countries with weakly-developed Brotherhoods, consists of an international NGO founded by Brothers in countries outside the wider Horn. Such an NGO will use local Brothers to act as local leaders. In this model local Brothers will operate as local members of the wider organisation. Internationally the Brothers often also communicate through seminars and meetings, and partake in professional syndicates of doctors, lecturers and scientists. This means that the Brothers can draw upon extensive know-how, although the potential of this has not been exploited to the full.

The report found that the international structures of the Brotherhood are important, that resources can be obtained through networks and that a weak Brotherhood can lean on a stronger one. International engagement from other Brotherhood organisations can mean that local Brotherhoods get support to deal with alien ideological elements within their ranks. The Gulf-based charities can also act as bankers, supporting poor Brotherhoods financially.

There are global struggles to be fought; the Israel/Palestine conflict and Hamas seems to be very important to all the Brotherhoods explored in the report. Moreover, the global showdown between Hassan Turabi and the Egyptian Brothers has influenced all of the Brotherhoods. This does not mean that the international Brotherhood is a strong hierarchical organisation – it is rather a loose gathering of peers of which the Egyptian Brotherhood functions as the “first among equals”.

7.3 Partners?

The track record of the Brotherhood and peacemaking is rather poor. In Yemen, the tribal elements with Islah, although not clearly Brotherhood, have clearly contributed to tension. In Sudan, views on Darfur and the South have been rather extreme. Although these extreme attitudes and factors seem to be moderating, there does not seem to be any peacemaking potential for the Brotherhood at state level as they are too political. There

may however be some potential at local level amongst Sunni Muslims. While the Somali Islax has been quite successful at a local level, their engagement at national level has brought them into a power game that hurt them badly – they had to face up to Ethiopia. In Yemen, peacemaking has just started for Al Islah, driven by necessity as Yemen draws closer to the brink of collapse. However, peacemaking has been hindered by Islah's previous participation in conflicts and by their initial anti-Shia stand as belligerents largely rejected them as negotiators.

Nevertheless, it should be taken into consideration that the Brotherhoods are relatively stable organisations in volatile societies. They should generally be involved as parties or in peacemaking at more local levels, particularly in Yemen which is now engulfed in an increasing civil war.

The Brotherhood charities are fairly successful in what they do, and they operate under difficult circumstances. The ideological agenda has been harnessed for positive purposes by many Western partners and may cause no problems. One of the Brotherhood's ideological aims is to work with charities, and honesty is one of its basic values – these two values can be harnessed for positive purposes in partnerships. The devil is in the detail, and partnerships have to be transparent as well as to build trust, and there has to be control routines to ensure the above.

7.4 Engagement

The key recommendation of this report is to engage the Brothers, but to engage them in a way that is based on knowledge. Radical elements should be avoided, and the political targets of the Brotherhood, including their views on Darfur and Hamas, should be borne in mind. The Brothers are not common civil society organisations; they have clear political goals, some of which are contradictory to the long-term goals of potential partners. However, the wider Horn is an unstable place, and even the political agenda of the Brothers becomes somewhat moderate when compared to other political groups in the area. In the context in which the Brothers of the wider Horn exist, they are often amongst the more moderate and peaceful parties.

A dialectic view on politics and on Sharia allows flexibility, and it should be remembered that the Brotherhoods operate in relatively tough conditions. Their expertise can be used to address situations in which Western NGOs lack the will to engage. Basically the Brotherhoods bring competence; they bring organisational structures adapted to harsh local reality with a proven ability to survive conflict. They also bring genuine commitment. Partners may bring standards, and common aims and targets can be found without partners having to sacrifice their human rights standpoint.

The Brotherhoods role in state-level peace negotiations seems limited as they are too political. Brothers are best at creating local peace between traditional Sunnis acting as tribal or clan brokers. Even in such activities, partnerships and engagement offer assistance: external partners may provide Brothers with resources, while at the same time negotiating common standards that take human rights into consideration.

The Brotherhood's peacemaking efforts thus seem to be best at local level with partners, and between belligerents that share the Brothers' general stand on Islam, Sunnism. Religion does not seem to be the glue prescribed by the Brothers themselves.

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Annex 1 Glossary

<i>Al-Da'wa Wal Irshad</i>	Intensification of Islamic missionary work, (Part of Islax' strategy after the civil war in Somalia)
<i>Al-Iqatha wa Tacliim</i>	Focusing on relief operations and education, (Part of Islax' strategy after the civil war in Somalia)
<i>Al-Nizām Al Islami</i>	The Islamic Order
<i>Al-Khalas</i>	Islamist organization in Eritrea
<i>Al-Shebab</i>	Militant Islamist Organization in Somalia
<i>Amir</i>	Ruler
<i>Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a</i>	The Followers of the Sunna; also a Somali organisation
<i>Bid'ah</i>	Sinful innovation
<i>Da'wa</i>	Missionary work
<i>Fard</i>	Religious duty
<i>Fatwa</i>	Legal opinion
<i>Fikera</i>	A loose form of ideology
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Fitnah</i>	Schism
<i>Hadith</i>	Oral traditions regarding the sayings of the Prophet
<i>Hajj</i>	Major pilgrimage
<i>Hudud</i>	Harsh punishment such as amputation based on the Shariah.
<i>Ijtihad</i>	The process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah
<i>Ikhwan</i>	Muslim Brotherhood

<i>Imam</i>	Islamic leader
<i>Jahiliyyaa</i>	Ignorance, barbarism
<i>Jihad</i>	The concept of jihad is heavily discussed, often translated as “holy war”, also translated as “struggle/personal effort”
<i>Jihad-e-Akbar</i>	The greater jihad against one’s soul (<i>nafs</i>) at personal level
<i>Jihad-e-Ashgar</i>	The lesser jihad; struggle in self-defence in the way of God
<i>Khalifah</i>	Head of Muslim state
<i>Kuffar</i>	Unbelievers
<i>Kufr</i>	Rejection of Islamic rules
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Qadi</i>	A religious judge ruling in
<i>Qiyas</i>	The process of analogical reasoning in which the teachings of the Quran are compared and contrasted with those of the Hadiths and Ijima
<i>Qadiyanis</i>	Group within the Ahmadi community
<i>Qutbists</i>	Followers of Sayyid Qutb’s ideology
<i>Salam</i>	Peace
<i>Salab</i>	Righteousness
<i>Salat</i>	Prayer
<i>Shariah</i>	Islamic law
<i>Sheik</i>	Honorific term in the Arabic language that literally means “elder”. It is commonly used to designate an elder of a tribe, a lord, a revered wise man, or most commonly an Islamic scholar.
<i>Shia</i>	Minority faith group within Islam
<i>Shura</i>	Council, used for Islamic institutions with parliamentary functions
<i>Sunnab</i>	Deeds of the Prophet
<i>Sunni</i>	Majority faith group within Islam
<i>Surah</i>	Chapter in the <i>Qur’an</i>
<i>Tafsir</i>	Interpretation of the <i>Qur’an</i>

Takfir

Ex-communication of Muslims

Zam Zam

Originally a well where the Prophet's family got water, and a target for pilgrims going to Mecca and Medina, today a name used on many Muslim NGOs