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# Development of the Jihadist Activity in Egypt

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### Introduction

The jihadist movement has returned to the Egyptian scene with the release of its elements from prison following the January Revolution (2011). However, jihadists resumed their operations following the regime's escalation of repression after the July military coup (2013).

This paper addresses the Egyptian jihadist movement from the January Revolution until mid-2018. However, the first episode discusses the jihadist movement prior to the January Revolution (2011). To understand the Egyptian jihadist situation during the January Revolution and beyond, we should first address the origins of the Egyptian jihadist movement, its historical roots, its intellectual foundations, its organizational structure, as well as its change project and its successes and failures before the revolution.

### The study is divided into three main parts:

- **The first part** addresses the jihadist situation in Egypt since its inception until the January Revolution (2011).
- **The second part** deals with the jihadist situation in Egypt since the January Revolution to the military coup on 3 July 2013.
- **The third part** addresses the jihadist situation since the military coup until mid-2018.

### Development of the Jihadist experiment in Egypt

The first part of the study discusses the organizational development of the jihadist movement in Egypt starting from the activities of jihadist groups to the inception of

the Egyptian Jihad Group - during the period from 1966 to 1988. In fact, the jihadist movement did not arise as a unified organization but it emerged in the form of several separate groups, many of which were established during the Nasserite era. Over the course of time, some of these groups merged into one group in 1988 under the name of the Egyptian Jihad Group.

Then, the first part briefly reviews the experience of the Egyptian Jihad Group since its inception up to the faltering of its change project inside Egypt and its integration with Al-Qaeda organization, and the consequences of this on the situation of the group in the Egyptian scene. Because the Egyptian Islamic Group represented the second stream of the jihadist movement in Egypt during the eras of Sadat and Mubarak, this part of the study addresses the experience of this group by tracing the roots of inception as a student movement in the early seventies and then the group's engagement in politics over time, where it had become a jihadist movement with a specific framework, through entering clashes with the regime, up to adopting intellectual reviews that have completely changed its course.

Also, the first part of the study briefly discusses some jihadist groups that emerged after the 9/11 events and were influenced by the doctrine of the Al-Qaeda organization such as Shubra Organization and the Tawhid and the Jihad Group in Sinai. The first part concludes with introducing an analysis of the first jihadist experiment in Egypt since its inception until the January Revolution.

### The Jihadist situation since inception to January 2011

1- The early jihadist groups were established in Egypt on the basis of attempting to take revenge against the oppressive regime and seeking to change regime, without having a clear strategy of change. The lack of organizational cohesion of these groups

in parallel with the weak homogeneity of their components led to their rapid fragmentation in a short time. Although the Islamic Group did not adopt confrontation of the regime during its early years, however it was forced by the Sadat regime to do so following the regime's pursuit to "trim its nails" after trying to transfer its activity from within university campus to the street. The group later engaged in a violent struggle against the Mubarak regime on a retaliation ground, lacking a strategic vision. However, the security services escalated its crackdown on the Islamic Group which led to dismantling it gradually.

2- The jihadist movement is completely different from the Muslim Brotherhood, as it emerged as a confrontational stream that adopts the inevitability of confrontation; and it rejects the Muslim Brotherhood's peaceful approach. However, the jihadist movement was sentimentally affected by the injustices that the Muslim Brotherhood was exposed to during the Nasserite era.

3 -The jihadist movement arose under a coherent regional system and strong national states that controlled their borders and peoples and enjoyed a protection umbrella from the major powers. Therefore, Egypt's ruling regime enjoyed legal legitimacy before the masses; and most of jihadists were regarded as illegitimate extremists. In addition, most Islamic groups used to condemn armed operations and presented anti-violence views, which constituted an obstacle to the expansion of jihadist ideas.

4- The jihadist stream, particularly the Islamic Group, contributed to creation of a state of commitment to religion through their declared preaching activity. But the fact that most jihadist groups focused on the priority of fighting the near enemy, and the need to fight those refraining from commitment to Islamic formative regulations, and their abstention from engagement in political participation - in addition to a range of issues



that were difficult to understand on the part of broad segments of the Egyptian people - led to restricting the jihadist groups in an elite of revolutionary youth.

5 -The Jihad Group was not able to succeed in achieving its strategy of change in Egypt. Also, the lack of funding reduced the scope of its activities and limited the group's ability to cover its needs or the needs of detainees and their families. Finally, the extensive experience of the Egyptian security services contributed to dismantling the jihadist movement groups within Egypt.

6- The jihadist movement succeeded to revive the state of confrontation following the Nasserite repression, and managed to exploit the outer arenas in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia in the training and development of its elements.

\*Read the complete study in Arabic [here](#).