



## Global Islamism Monitor No. 58

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; Africa; Iran; Middle East

### SECTARIAN DIVISIONS DEEPEN IN NIGERIA

Unrest among Nigeria's Shi'ites could change the dynamics of that country's Islamist insurgency. Traditionally, Boko Haram, a Sunni extremist group, has dominated the country's Islamist milieu. But recent clashes outside the capital, Abuja, have raised the specter of a different sectarian threat. The clashes, which occurred between government forces and Shi'ite protesters, erupted over a procession marking the Shi'ite holiday of Arbeen and agitating for the release of Ibrahim Zakzaky, the head of the Shi'ite Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), who has been imprisoned since 2015. The IMN has accused government forces of killing nearly 30 of its members in the resulting confrontation, sharpening pre-existing tensions between the government of President Muhammadu Buhari and the country's Shi'ite minority.

Observers have expressed fears that the incident, as well as underlying grievances, could lead the IMN to become a "second Boko Haram." "The Shia ideology is in opposition of what the establishment follows, which is Saudi Arabian Wahabism," notes Michael Olufemi Sodipo of the Peace Initiative Network, a Nigerian peacebuilding organization. "And the IMN has a lot of followers in the north. We are also entering an election period." (Berlin *Deutsche Welle*, October 30, 2018)

### THE COST OF PAKISTANI REFORM

Amid mass protests in Pakistan's capital, Maulana Sami-ul Haq, the radical cleric dubbed the "the father of the Taliban," has been killed at his home outside Islamabad. Haq was reportedly stabbed and shot to death while lying in bed without the protection of his bodyguard or driver. The attack is likely linked to ongoing protests and violence throughout the country over a Christian woman, Asia Bibi, who was acquitted of blasphemy charges - a verdict which resulted in calls for the death of the presiding judges in the case, and for armed uprisings. Haq had found himself on the wrong side of the controversy; although an Islamist and a prominent member of one of the country's conservative religious parties, he had of late aligned himself with the agenda of new liberal Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is attempting to institute religious reforms on the conservative electorate. (*Washington Post*, November 2, 2018)

### THE PACE OF PALESTINIAN TERRORISM

Israel continues to confront a pervasive domestic threat environment, one of the country's top security officials has told the Knesset. In recent testimony to the parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Nadav Argaman, the Director of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic security service, revealed that the country has thwarted 480 substantial terror attacks, 590 potential lone wolf attacks, and uncovered 219 separate cells of the radical Hamas movement over the past twelve months. To keep pace with the fast-moving nature of the threat, the Shin Bet is employing a number of new tactics - including monitoring Palestinian social media accounts, relying on informants, and using complex algorithms that assess the likelihood a particular individual will engage in terrorism. (*Jerusalem Post*, November 6, 2018)

### RUSSIAN WORRIES OVER JIHADIST RECONCILIATION

Is an al-Qaeda-ISIS merger in the offing? Russia's intelligence agencies seem to think so. According to Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), the Bin Laden network and the Islamic State may be willing to put their differences aside and work together in the face of common threats from the United States and other Western nations. The head of the FSB, Alexander Bortnikov, has warned publicly that there are signs of an "imminent merge" between the two rival Islamist groups - a development that would both change and expand the threat these organizations now pose to Russia and other nations. "Both organizations use a similar ideological basis and common manpower for replenishing each other's units," and therefore a merger is not out of the question despite their ideological differences, Bortnikov explained to a recent conference of law enforcement officials in Moscow. (London *ASharq al-Awsat*, November 8, 2018)